

THE
RELIGION
OF THE
ANCIENT GREEKS
ILLUSTRATED,
BY AN EXPLANATION OF THEIR
MYTHOLOGY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
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MULTA RENASCENTUR QUÆ JAM CECIDERE; CADENTQUE,
QUÆ NUNC SUNT IN HONORE.

Horat.

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T H E

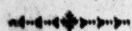
P R E F A C E.

**A**FTER the multiplicity of books on the subject of Mythology, and after so many efforts have been made to extricate it from the confusion in which it is involved, we do not come forward to hazard a new hypothesis. Our inquiries would be of little moment, if they tended merely to illustrate the fables of the Ancients. Our object is of much greater importance, that of explaining their religious system.

EVERY person is acquainted with the deities of antiquity, and familiar with their attributes as well as with their names ; but provided such acquaintance is sufficient to make us understand the allusions of the Poets, and to relish the productions of ancient art, we scarcely think of inquiring farther ; and though it is impossible, from the smallest reflection on the nature of man, or from the experience of every age, to suppose that the nations of antiquity



## PREFACE.



quity were destitute of a religion, that which is attributed to them seems hardly to deserve the sacred name.

HAVING undertaken to restore the Ancient Religion to the enjoyment of its rights and to its original dignity, we have considered it chiefly among the Greeks, a people peculiarly intitled to fix the attention of posterity; because, for a long space of time they were the depositaries of the Eastern learning; and because we are indebted to them for the greater part of those opinions which, originally conceived in the countries of Upper Asia, were afterwards transported into the West, where they still continue to maintain authority and influence.

OUR first care has been to distribute into classes, that multitude of deities whose names seem at first to present an assemblage altogether inextricable. But after having discovered the order in which they ought to be arranged, they seemed as it were naturally to fall into their proper places, and we then had little difficulty in accounting for their origin, their functions,

functions, and all those adventures, apparently so absurd, which compose their history.

PREFACE

AFTERWARDS, upon a strict investigation of the secret doctrines and mysterious rites of this religion, we find that it inculcated all the principles of a pure morality, that it was dignified and austere, and that it had obtained supreme authority over the multitude: we even frequently discover in it the source of many traditions which have since been universally held sacred; and, lastly, we are led to conclude, that the Ancient Religion differed not essentially from that of Modern times; that though it may have varied in modes, it has always pursued the same end, and maintained the same spirit, the same character.

SUCH, in general, is the plan of this work. We have excluded from it the terms *Idolatry*, *Paganism*, and all those injurious names by which the worship of the Ancients has been perpetually branded. Fanaticism and superstition alone, deserve to be held forth as the objects of hatred and of ridicule. Let us content ourselves with pitying the nations that have not been favoured with the light of true  
 a religion.

## PREFACE.

religion. But since prejudices are incident to man, before we condemn those by which a great nation was governed, it is reasonable to examine the effects of their influence on that nation, and whether they tended to dishonour human reason : it is also particularly necessary to form an exact idea of them ; but this idea, the greater part of those who have attended to this subject have never endeavoured to attain.

THERE are a few authors, whose researches on the Religion of the Ancients are exceedingly ingenious, but the rest are no otherwise useful than by their labour in collecting facts ; and this is almost the only advantage we derive from some works of erudition, immense compilations, that contain not a single idea. It is much to be wished, that some superior genius would undertake to methodize the materials that have been thus collected, and to restore the monuments of antiquity that have been so cruelly mutilated by time, and still more by modern speculations.

THE necessity of such an undertaking became very apparent to us, in taking a view of the manner in which those authors have treated



ed Mythology: In general, as we shall have PREFACE.  
more than once occasion to remark, it is difficult, with a mind less expanded, to betray a vanity more ridiculous ; and what Cicerò says, when speaking of philosophers (*de Divinatione* lib. II. c. 58.) that nothing is so absurd as not to have been maintained by some of them, may with greater propriety be applied to mythologists.

IN giving an account of all those systems, so puerile in themselves and so seriously proposed, we thought it would not be unacceptable, if we gave a character of the different works we had occasion to make use of: a short analysis of them will be found in the Appendix. If every writer, on whatever subject, would thus characterize and appretiate the books that he is obliged to consult, it would be the means of making us intimately acquainted with all the stores of literature. Perhaps we shall be accused of having given our opinion on some occasions too freely ; but if it be the first duty of him who writes to love truth, he ought also to have the boldness to tell it ; and our respect for the public has made us overlook every private consideration.



**PREFACE.**

HOWEVER anxious we have been to deserve the approbation of men of letters, if this treatise shall but exhibit to the generality of mankind, an explanation of those agreeable images which they have found in reading the Poets, which the beauties of art present to them on every hand ; especially if it shall draw their attention to a religion hitherto misunderstood, though that of a people most celebrated by its institutions, we shall rest satisfied with having attained one end, at least, truly useful.

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C O N.

THE  
RELIGION  
OF THE  
GREEKS  
ILLUSTRATED.

---

INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE Religion of the Greeks is the object of our inquiry; and we mean to investigate the sentiments conceived of this important subject, by a people so anciently celebrated; who, more than any other, extended the limits of human reason; and whose institutions have, at this day, a distinguished authority among civilized nations.

Design of  
the Work.

THE early ages of Greece will not detain us long. The Religion of the ancient inhabitants of that country was suited to the nature of their pastoral life. It was simple and rude in its origin, and differed little from that which

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has

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DUCTION.  
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has since been observed among the scattered hordes in the wilds of America. It would, indeed, merit little attention, if it did not afford us an opportunity of viewing the important spectacle of a great nation in its infancy. It is pleasing to contemplate the dawnings of genius among such a people, and to trace the steps that mark their approaches to civilization; nor can we more certainly ascertain the progress of their manners, than by studying the opinions they successively embraced.

Religion of  
the first in-  
habitants of  
Greece.

THE Pelasgi, intent at first on the means of procuring subsistence, did not enlarge the small number of ideas which their situation required. They deified the tree that gave them food. The old oaks of Dodona, worshipped for so many ages, attest the gratitude and simplicity of their first adorers. Afterwards, when separate tribes were established, and war had ensanguined the field, the instruments of violence were personified, and the weapon that decided the contest was exalted into a deity. On this being, the name of *Mars* was bestowed; and he was represented, as he had been by the Scythians, under the figure of

of a lance\*. It was not till long after, when a multitude of particular beings had been consecrated, that he rose to the rank of an Immortal. Then he assumed a character analogous to his origin†. Cruelty, ferocity, and violence, were the attributes ascribed to him, and they demonstrate his title to the sovereign rule over a barbarous people. The Greeks worshipped no other God, while they continued in the savage state. But they insensibly acquired more elevated ideas. The sublime spectacle of the universe soon began to attract their regard. They observed the daily rapid and regular motion of the heavens; and being incapable of rising to the conception of a first cause, they attributed to the stars a supernatural power, and were constrained by admiration to pay them divine honours. To adore and to enjoy the influence of these deities, they assembled in the fields. Hence the name of *Temple*, which in their language signified the void of the air, the space comprehended between the earth and the firmament, has been ever afterwards applied to sacred edifices; and, in order to design the object of their

A 2

adoration,

\* Varro.

† The name of Mars, in Greek, signifies *Iron*.



INTRO-  
DUCTION.

\*\*\*\*\*

adoration, they made use of a word \* which originally signified the mere action of turning, or running, and which has since been ennobled with the being to whom it was applied: that word is G O D.

Revolu-  
tion in the  
Manners  
and Reli-  
gion of the  
Greeks.

BUT why should we consider all the steps of their progress from barbarism? It is sufficient to point out the strongly-marked characters that distinguished them in these early times. Our object is not to delineate the ideas of a rude and savage people, but those of a wise and enlightened nation, worthy of fixing the attention of posterity. Greece did not merit a place in the annals of history, till strangers had introduced into it new manners, and new institutions. The arrival of the Eastern Colonies must be considered as the dawn of that glorious day that was to irradiate this happy country. The Pelasgi were still plunged in darkness; but as soon as the arts arose on their horizon, the night that overspread them immediately withdrew. Nature displayed herself to their eyes in colours the most vivid, and Genius gave them laws. While walls arose on every hand at the voice of Amphion, Orpheus

\* *eu curro,*

pheus made the woods resound with the harmony of his lyre. The trees seemed attentive to his accents ; and the wildest animals grew tame, and flocked around him. All these circumstances were emblematical of the revolution which he operated in the manners of a savage people. At once Legislator and Pontiff, he sung the origin of the world, and the development of chaos. The sublime doctrine which he taught his compatriots, was calculated to dignify their nature, and to instill into their minds the love of every virtue. But, as we have before observed, the worship which he instituted was new to Greece : its origin is not to be sought for in the mountains of Thrace. To investigate it thoroughly, we must transport ourselves into the countries that fostered its infancy, and we shall then be better able to view it as a whole, and to judge of the modifications it must have undergone in its passage to other climates.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

Our knowledge and our errors come originally from the countries that were most anciently civilized, from those where the first impulse was given to the human mind. The East, that kindly soil of superstition and of despotism,

General  
view of the  
origin of  
Religions.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

gave birth to the greater part of those opinions that have since extended their often hurtful, and sometimes fatal influence over the rest of the world. Religion, from which men expect consolation, but which they often turn into a source of calamity, likewise issued from its bosom. Of this we may easily be convinced, by attending to the spirit of all those systems that have hitherto been promulgated to the world: the amazing conformity that subsists among them all, is sufficient to shew, if we had no other evidence, that they have but one common origin. They are all animated by the same spirit, and have all the same tendency; the principles, the dogmas, and ceremonies that constitute them, are the same. If we compare them together, we shall soon be convinced that they are all reducible to one, and that their differences proceed from causes that are local and extraneous. The Scandinavian invoked the terrible giant of the frost\*; while the inhabitant of the Tropic prostrated himself before the burning star of day; and yet Odin, the famous legislator, who formed a nation of heroes under the ice of the pole, issued from the same regions where, a few ages before, the Persians had

\* Mallet's Introduction to the History of Denmark.



had adopted the system of the Magi ; where, in more modern times, a simple Camel-driver kindled in the hearts of the Arabians an enthusiasm which changed the face of the world. Thus, the institutions of Odin were similar to those of Mahomet ; both spoke the language of Orpheus, of Zoroaster, of all who have founded a new religion. May we not therefore affirm, that hitherto there has existed but one religion under different names ; which, accommodating itself to circumstances, has appeared under different forms ; which, sometimes gloomy and austere, sometimes amiable and majestic, has always proposed to astonish the imagination, and to subdue it ; and which, in every age, and in every climate, has been modelled to a correspondence with the genius of the people it has subjected to its power.

INTRO-  
DUCTION,

AMONG the ancients, in those times that may be called the infancy of the world, because they are the first of which history makes mention, Religion obtained a distinguished pre-eminence. Man, the inhabitant of a new earth, began to enjoy the happy effects of his industry. The sciences, of which some vestiges had been preserved amidst the revolutions that had ravaged

Religion  
of the an-  
cients.



INTRO-  
DUCTION.  
♦♦♦♦♦

the globe, returned to embellish his abode. Those who collected the precious remains, endeavoured to secure their duration. To preserve them in perpetual remembrance, and to transmit them to future generations, they were made objects of worship. Religion became the august deposit to which all discoveries were consigned. Astronomy, mathematics, the study of the laws of nature, and that of the still more important duties of society, she collected together, and formed of them the greatest and most magnificent tablature that genius has ever been able to conceive. At this day, when time has destroyed the symmetry of its fabric, there is no means of restoring it, except by following, not the successive progress of human acquirements, but the order in which they may be disposed. Thus the ancient fables, will naturally arrange themselves in different classes, and will admit of an explanation altogether new. An attentive observer, transplanted into those opulent regions, once the seat of the arts, tho' now desert and forsaken, may judge by the sight of the ruins that surround him what must have been the beauty of the edifice, and may endeavour to pourtray it.

THE

THE first of all sciences, is that which develops the principles of things, and which raises us to the contemplation of a superior and intelligent being, who has impressed motion on matter, who eludes our senses, but whose presence is ever manifest in his works. The sensible and material objects that compose the universe demand the second place. What can be more worthy of admiration, than those constant and unalterable laws, to which all those bodies are subjected, which, from the surface of the earth to the canopy of heaven, are shed around us with such vast profusion! Next comes Man, to engross our attention. His relations, considered as an individual, or as a social being, his labours, his discoveries, in short, whatever he has invented or performed, are not less worthy to be held forth to public veneration.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

What was  
its object.

THIS simple division was certainly adopted by the ancient sages, and it formed the groundwork of their religious system. God, Nature, and Man, were the great objects which they proposed to delineate. Hence arise three kinds of theology, which may be named Intellectual, Physical, and Civil Theology. It is evident,

Manner  
in which  
it ought to  
be viewed.

**INTRO-  
DUCTION.**



evident, from the testimony of Herodotus \*, that a similar distinction took place in Egypt. The inhabitants of that country, whose great wisdom has been so much celebrated, and who had the honour of illuminating the rest of the world, admitted three sorts of divinities, different from each other, in number, qualities, and functions.

**Division of  
Deities in-  
to three  
great clas-  
ses,**

THE principles of things then are represented by the first class. The different deities it includes, signified the modifications of matter, and the attributes of the being who had given it form ; that superior intelligent being, who displays his greatness in the multitude of worlds that fill the immensity of space ; who is employed in preserving, directing, and maintaining order among the works of his hands, and who alone presided at the creation of the universe.

THE second class exhibits the spectacle of that universe after it was created. Under the emblem of Isis, of Osiris, and the other divinities of that order, it represents the greatest phenomena of nature ; the path which the planets describe in their orbits ; the different aspects

\* Lib. 2. § 145.



aspects of that nocturnal luminary which sheds so soft a light, and the periodical returns of which were celebrated in festivals; but chiefly, it presents the majestic course of the parent of seasons, whether he inflames the hemisphere with his meridian rays, or seems to retreat into other climates, and to threaten the world with the rigours of perpetual winter.

INTRO-  
DUCTION,

MAN himself appears in the third class; not indeed Man elevated to the rank of gods, and proud of the vain honours of an apotheosis; but Man enjoying the bounties of the supreme Deity, and the benign influence of the stars; Man cultivating the earth, now become his domain, and compelling her to yield up to him her treasures: Man, in fine, inventing arts, subjecting to calculation the revolutions of the spheres, and, by the exercise of virtue, exalting himself to Heaven,

SUCH then is the mythology which some have taken pains to disfigure, which has been represented as a mass of absurdity and incoherent fiction. In our view of it, nothing is ridiculous; its fables are aggrandized with the objects they are intended to represent; they include

Explicati-  
ons which  
have been  
given of  
Mytholo-  
gy.



INTRO-  
DUCTION.

include a sublime system of religion, invented in an age when the spirit of intolerance had not yet restrained the force and vigour of imagination. If the ancients, then, are proposed to us as models; if their laws, their government, their institutions, have been celebrated; and if they were acquainted with the most rigorous duties of morality, shall we maintain, that in the august functions of religion they in the least degraded their nature; that they created monsters, before whom they were to fall down, and that in the person of their gods they worshipped vice, and paid honours to guilt? Let us do more justice to men who are still our masters, if we would not incur the just reproaches of posterity. It is time to demolish the delusions of pride, and the fancies of vain erudition. Listen to those pretended sages, who think themselves superior to the wisdom of antiquity, and who have dared to expose to ridicule its most venerable monuments. To what have their profound researches tended, but to bewilder, and to display the imbecillity of their own reason? Most of them have considered mythology as the figurative recital of historical events: and it is singular, that they should, almost universally,

universally, have joined to embrace an opinion, which, originating in vanity and excessive adulation, could only be maintained by ignorance or deceit.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

ALEXANDER the Great, whom genius and uncommon success had raised above ordinary men, gave himself out as the son of a god. The princes, his successors, imitated his example; perhaps, hoping by that means to impose the more easily on the people over whom they had usurped the dominion, and divine honours were insensibly paid to them. It was at this time that Euhemerus published his sacred history, which seemed in some measure to justify the rite of apotheosis. He pretended to have discovered an island, till then unknown, called Panchaia, in which, he said, were deposited the tombs of all those personages whom the people adored. Though little attention was at that period bestowed on theological discussions, and though the time was not then come in which they were to trouble the repose of the world, this work did not fail to excite speculation. Accordingly it was with much keenness attacked by Callimachus, a co-temporary writer, by Strabo, by Plutarch, and

Euhemerism.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

Different  
systems of  
the mo-  
derns.

and by all who foresaw the consequences that were likely to flow from it. "What think you, says Cicero, of those who maintain, that illustrious, valiant, or powerful men, have obtained divine honours after death; and that these are the very gods whom we worship and invoke?" This system was conceived at the court of the despots who governed Egypt; it was revived at a time, when all the countries of the earth were in a state of slavery. Diodorus Siculus, who wrote in the reign of Augustus, adopted the ideas of Euhemerus, and made them the basis of his Poetical Library. Afterwards, when the first defenders of Christianity proposed, by their writings, to support the authority of the Emperors, they were particularly anxious to turn into ridicule the doctrines of the ancient religion. Animated by the same spirit, the moderns in general have followed their footsteps; or, if some of them have acknowledged the absurdity of such an opinion, if they have perceived that it introduced confusion into history, and degraded its dignity, they have substituted in its stead the most frivolous conjectures. Some, in explaining the fables of antiquity, have talked of the Philosopher's stone,



stone \*, of the magnet †, of ditches and canals ‡, of the course of rivers §, of certain voyages undertaken by merchants ||, of Noah's ark, and other Jewish traditions ¶. Few have entertained a just idea of the religion of the ancients, or have been able to remove the veil with which it is covered.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

—♦♦♦—

THAT Religion, having been conceived on the banks of the Nile, quickly passed over to the plains of Asia. The Phenicians, who were then the chain of connection between nations, carried it into Greece, whence it spread itself insensibly over the rest of Europe; altered, however, and perpetually changing its aspect, as it withdrew from its native spot. In the East, where Despotism had taken deep root, it became the dread instrument of tyranny, and, even at this day, still rivets the chains it originally forged in those countries. There the priests, the sole depositaries of science, reserved for themselves the privilege of thinking, and exacted from the rest of the nation a blind obedience. The people uniformly

Religion in  
the East.

\* Tullius.

† Herward.

‡ Bergler.

§ Banier.

|| Le Clerk.

¶ Bryant.



**INTRO-  
DUCTION.** formly confounded civil with religious bondage, by both of which they were equally oppressed. The Monarch was the God; his judgments and decrees proceeded from heaven, and his court was the temple that inspired terror and respect. It was otherwise in those fortunate countries, where liberty, newly born, allowed the mind to exert its native energy. How could fierce and independent nations endure any other yoke than that of laws? The worship established among them must have enlightened, not enslaved them. Let us now, then, view Religion among a free people. Is it not more pleasing to contemplate the homage of a good man thanking the Author of nature for his benefits, than the vile submission of a slave prostrate before a master?

**In Greece.** IN Greece, as in every country of the world, the form of government had undoubtedly a decisive influence on Religion; and particular circumstances contributed likewise to vary its appearance. We have already seen, that, in the beginning, its establishment was accomplished by strangers. The colonies that introduced it were composed of merchants and of soldiers, whom chance, or the prospect of gain, had

had conducted to a savage coast. The eastern Deities were made known at first only in succession; whence it happened, that they did not always preserve the rank and the functions, which had been originally assigned to them. Mistakes were likewise occasioned by the difference of language. The primitive denominations were in general preserved; but it frequently happened, that mere epithets were adopted as real names\*. Sometimes also, the Pelasgi made use of words drawn from their own language, and instead of renouncing their ancient rites, they mingled them with the new.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

Changes it  
suffered  
there.

BUT what principally increased the confusion, was the liberty given to poets of invading the religious traditions, and of altering them at their pleasure. The first poems were hymns or sacred songs, which the people recited with a loud voice in the midst of their most solemn ceremonies. Such were the poems of Orpheus, those precious remnants of antiquity, which breathe the eastern genius in every line, though this was speedily extinguished in the ages that

B follow-

Causes that  
altered it.

\* "Ἡφαίστος, pater ignis; "Ἠλίας, fortis; Ἀθηνᾶ, virgo; Ἑρμῆς, interpres, &c.

INTRO-  
DUCTION.

followed : and scarcely are a few sparks of it to be found in the theogony of Hesiod, that singular work, in which the author seems frequently to have been guided by caprice, and which consists of absurd genealogies accumulated without discernment as they presented themselves to his fancy. The muse of poetry, it is true, preserved that divine enthusiasm by which she is essentially characterised ; but she deigned to descend from the top of Olympus, to celebrate the exploits of heroes and patriots who had been the benefactors of their country. Accustomed, however, to that noble mythology which had originally been her theme, she continued to extract from it those brilliant colours with which she enriched her pictures. Then, every poet giving reins to his imagination, the old fables were mangled, and sometimes new ones invented. At this time appeared Homer ; and the marvellous which he has so happily employed, became the ground-work of all similar subsequent productions. When the Gods were engaged in the actions of men, it was necessary to subject them to human passions. From epic they were introduced into dramatic poetry, where they preserved the same character, so that two different kinds of worship were formed :

the



the one we shall call Popular, because the sensible images it exhibited were better known, and more universally adopted; and because, being continually practised, they were at last substituted in the place of the ancient: the other may be termed the Myste-  
 rious, or Sacred, which being shut up in the interior of the temples, and guarded against the attacks of every sacrilegious hand, was, properly speaking, the worship of the nation.

INTRO-  
 DUC-  
 TION.

THESE two species of worship are the principal object of our inquiries. We shall, in the first place, take a view of the Grecian divinities in detail, by which we may form an idea of what is called the Popular or Public Worship. But while we point out the causes that gradually introduced it, we shall be particularly careful to mark the origin of each particular god, to describe his functions and attributes, and the fables or sacred legends that composed his history. We shall then attend to the Sacred Worship, and we shall treat of those Mysteries that constituted the true essence of the religion, and comprised its principal dogmas. Lastly, after taking a cursory view of the festivals and other institutions connected with it, we shall endeavour

Division,  
 and general  
 plan of  
 this Treatise.



INTRO- vour to discover what sort of influence that re-  
DUCTION. ligion obtained over the people by whom it  
was adopted.

A N

AN  
ESSAY  
ON THE RELIGION OF THE  
GREEKS.

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CHAPTER I.

*Of the public Worship, or of the Divinities of the  
Ancient Greeks.*

**W**HEN the nature of the gods among the ancients was the subject of our review, we observed, that though they gave the name of Deity to whatever was the object of public veneration, they nevertheless acknowledged one supreme being, to whom the rest were subordinate. But the moderns have in general fallen into the sophism with which a philosopher of our days reproaches the ancient fathers of the church, who, after having defined God according to their own ideas, accused the ancients of contradiction in acknowledging many deities.

Idea which  
the ancients  
had of God.

## CHAPTER

## I.



But polytheism ought not to be confounded with idolatry. "Let us begin, says M. Duclos, by fixing the meaning of our terms. The first kind of worship consisted in the multiplication of deity, and in the distribution of its functions; the second, in paying to created and material beings the homage due only to God." And if it be true that this latter worship should be considered as the disgrace of humanity, if it has never obtained except amongst ignorant and barbarous nations, can we imagine that the most enlightened people of the world would have adopted it? Shall the Greeks be accused of idolatry, because they embraced the doctrines of polytheism? No, for we are certain that in reality they adored but one God. They represented him just as he has been conceived by the most sacred of all religions, and they had the sublimest ideas of his being and essence. From them are borrowed the images by which he is described with us. All the proofs of his existence, drawn from the law of nature, from the moral principle, from the unanimous consent of nations, and from the contemplation of the universe, are to be found in their writings. Their Poets, their Orators, and their Philosophers, have all agreed in admitting the existence of

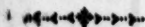
one supreme Deity, and some of them represented him in language truly eloquent. There  
 " is, " exclaims Orpheus, " a being incompre-  
 " hensible, the most ancient, the most exalted  
 " of all, the Creator of all things. This sublime  
 " being is life, is light, is wisdom." " The  
 " universe, says Proclus, was created by Jupiter.  
 " The wide expanse of heaven, the depths of  
 " Tartarus, the broad earth, the boundless o-  
 " cean, the immortal gods, the goddesses, and  
 " every thing that exists were originally con-  
 " tained in the fruitful bosom of Jupiter, and  
 " proceeded from him. Jupiter is the first, and  
 " the last ; the beginning, and the end."

BUT what the Greeks have left us of this kind most grand and august, is the hymn of Cleanthes preserved by Stobæus. " O thou who hast ma-  
 " ny names, but whose power is infinite and un-  
 " communicated ! O Jupiter, first of immort-  
 " als, sovereign of nature, who governest all, who  
 " subjeatest all to thy law, I worship thee ; for  
 " man is permitted to invoke thee. Every  
 " thing that lives or creeps, every thing mor-  
 " tal on earth is from thee, and of thee but an  
 " imperfect image. I will address to thee my  
 " hymns, and will never cease to celebrate  
 " thee.



## CHAPTER

## I.



“ thee. This universe, expanded over our heads,  
 “ and which seems to roll round the earth, is  
 “ obedient to thee alone ; and at thy command  
 “ are its motions in silence performed. Thun-  
 “ der, the executioner of thy will, is launched  
 “ by thy invincible arm. Endowed with im-  
 “ mortal life, it strikes, and nature is appalled.  
 “ Thou directest the universal mind that ani-  
 “ mates the whole, and that exists in all thy  
 “ creatures ; so unlimited and supreme is thy  
 “ power, O King ! Nothing in heaven, on the  
 “ earth, or in the sea, is produced without thee,  
 “ except the evil that proceeds from the heart  
 “ of the wicked. Thou bringest order out of  
 “ confusion, and by thee is the jarring of the e-  
 “ lements composed. Thou hast so mingled  
 “ good and evil, that general and universal  
 “ harmony is established. The wicked alone,  
 “ amongst all thy creatures, disturb this gener-  
 “ al harmony. Wretched men ! they seek for  
 “ happiness, but do not comprehend thy univer-  
 “ sal law, that by making them wise would make  
 “ them good, and consequently happy : but de-  
 “ clining from the path of what is beautiful and  
 “ just, they run headlong to the object that at-  
 “ tracts them ; they pant after fame, they grasp  
 “ at sordid treasures, they lust after plea-  
 “ sures

" fures that entice but to deceive them. O God!  
 " from whom all blessings descend, whom the  
 " storm and the thunder obey, preserve us from  
 " error ; deign to inform our minds ; attach us  
 " to that eternal reason by which thou art  
 " guided and supported in the government of  
 " the world ; that being ourselves honoured,  
 " we may also honour thee, as becomes feeble  
 " and mortal beings, by celebrating thy works  
 " in an uninterrupted hymn ; for neither the  
 " inhabitant of earth, nor the inhabitant of  
 " heaven, can be engaged in a service more  
 " noble than that of celebrating the divine  
 " mind who presides over Nature."

## CHAPTER

## I.

NEVER has any one spoken of the Divine  
 Being with greater sublimity ; and if we con-  
 sider the testimony of Varro, of Aristotle, of  
 the divine Plato, and of those others which  
 Cicero has preserved, we will cease to accuse,  
 of intellectual darkness, a people not less en-  
 lightened than ourselves, and who do not  
 yield to us in grandeur and elevation of senti-  
 ment.

AFTER having risen to the knowledge of a  
 Supreme Being, and having contemplated his  
 attributes,

Their o-  
 pinion of  
 matter

## CHAPTER

## I.



attributes, the ancients turned their attention to another substance, altogether different, but not less abstract, of which they never doubted the existence, as its qualities are in some sort palpable, though its origin is still a subject of dispute. This substance is matter. Is it eternal? Was it created out of nothing? These are abstract questions in which the human mind is lost and confounded, because the solution of them is beyond its powers. In this uncertainty the ancients embraced the opinion that seems subject to fewest difficulties, when we have nothing but mere reason for our guide. The idea of creation, "that idea by which we conceive nothing formed into something, by a mere act of volition\*," was to them incomprehensible. They admitted two principles, eternal and co-existent, but totally distinct in their nature; the one active, the other passive; the one the mover, the other moved; the one the efficient, the other the instrumental cause. The first is God, the second matter; from both of which all things that exist have proceeded.

First class  
of Gods.

THESE principles formed the first class of gods among the ancients.

THE

\* Rousseau.



THE Active Principle, also named the Demiurgic Intelligence, held the chief place. If the genius of this principle did not create the universe, he gave it form by his power, governs it by his wisdom, and maintains it in order by goodness and justice. He is the mind that reposed on the abyss, and made it pregnant. The elements that were mixed together in the bosom of Chaos, at his voice were separated and set free. He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He is the vivifying fire that penetrates all bodies: he animates them by his breath, he is the source of generation, and communicates motion and warmth to all. His different attributes were personified, and formed so many different emblems.

CHAPTER  
I.

Active  
principle.

CONSIDERED as the great architect of nature, he is called *Pha*, in the ancient language of Egypt, a name that the Greeks translated *Hephaestus*, or Vulcan. This God, in the popular creed, was nothing but a simple mechanic, yet every thing that came from his hands was of marvellous workmanship. He constructed the palace of the immortal Gods; and enriched it with all the wonders of art. It was he  
who

*Hephaestus*  
represented  
it.

Vulcanus



CHAPTER I. who forged the thunder, that redoubted weapon of the Deity, and the symbol of his omnipotence. "As the creative mind arranges all in truth, and with design, the Egyptians denominated him *Phta*: in Greece, they considered merely his mechanical operations, and called him *Vulcan* \*." But in the infancy of religion he was of primary dignity. He was married to *Minerva*, an union that shewed the intimate connection of the two divinities which separately represented the Demiurgic Intelligence. *Minerva*, who issued in armour from the brain of *Jupiter*, signified Prudence and Profound Wisdom. Over the gate of the temple dedicated to her at *Sais*, a city of Upper Egypt, and where she was worshipped under the name of *Neitha*, was this inscription, "I am that which was, which is, and shall be. The Sun is my offspring. No mortal hath lifted up my veil." *Tiresias* looked at her, and became blind. It was likewise forbidden, even to behold her statue. She presided over the arts; she had invented them all; for the genius bestowed on man is a portion of the celestial intelligence. Cities put themselves under her protection, assured that she would preserve

\* Jamblichus.

preserve their liberties, and that they would be safe from invasion, while the *Palladium* remained within their walls. The warlike *Pallas* accompanied to the field the hero who defended his country: she covered him with her *Egis*, and tempered with her prudence the impetuosity of his valour. *Ulysses* and *Diomedes* proceed under her auspices, and traverse without fear, the camp of their enemies. She descends from the top of the celestial arch to arrest the arm of *Achilles*. *Ajax*, who had profaned her altar, expired on a rock in the midst of the sea, and his unhappy companions were swallowed up by the waves. The allegory is every where manifest, and we see, that these ingenious fictions took their rise from the most metaphysical speculations.

CHAPTER

I.

THE being who impressed motion on matter, and who maintained life and heat, was regarded as the elementary fire. Under this idea she had the name of *Vesta*. The form of her temple represented the figure of the world, and it contained no image. A pure flame was kept burning night and day, as an emblem of that divine light, which, placed in the centre of the boundless sphere, diffuses itself

**CHAPTER** self incessantly towards every point of the circumference. Whatever revolutions affected the universe, the Goddess was immoveable. **I.** "All the Gods and Demons, ranged in two columns, followed Jupiter; Vesta alone remained in her temple \*." Only the pure and unspotted were allowed to approach her; and among the people of antiquity who were most distinguished for austerity of manners, we know with what rigour the priestesses, devoted to her shrine, preserved their virginity †.

**Hecate.**

To the ideas of intelligence, power, wisdom, and activity, inseparable from that of the divine being, was added that of Goodness. The Egyptians had personified this last attribute under the name of *Cneph*. After having formed the world, he governs and maintains every thing that exists; for the love of order is the essence of divine goodness. The Greeks gave this being the name of *Hecate*; an august goddess, from whom flowed riches and honour;

\* Plato.

† A similar institution was found established in Peru at the time of its discovery. Virgins dedicated to the Sun suffered the same punishment with the vestals on the loss of their chastity.



pour ; who was invoked at sea, and on land, and in the field of battle ; to whom the miserable fled for refuge, and whose powerful protection was necessary in all important enterprises. When the influence of the planets was admitted, that of the Moon appeared the most considerable. As the cause of every thing fortunate that happens, this planet had an intimate relation to the Goddess of Benevolence : the triple Hecate represented this luminary, and the three aspects under which it appears,

CHAPTER

I.

of the Moon

JUSTICE is an emanation from goodness. The being supremely good, is also supremely just : he dispenses judgment with the same hand by which his benefits are conveyed : at the foot of his throne stand two urns always open, from which he alternately draws : in the one are contained the calamities of life ; in the other its blessings ; unhappy they who have exposed themselves to his wrath : the terrible Nemesis appears armed with a formidable sword ; the criminals endeavour to evade her in vain ; she pursues them without intermission, she consigns them to the horrors of a guilty conscience, and precipitates them into the

Nemesis.



**CHAPTER** the deep abyfs of Tartarus. Are whole na-  
**I.** tions to be punished? Earthquakes and inun-  
 dations, volcanic eruptions, and the frame of  
 nature difordered, announce her vengeance, and  
 new generations fupply the place of a guilty  
 people, fwept for ever from the face of the  
 earth.

*Passive*  
**Principle.**

**THE** fecond, the **Passive Principle**, was like-  
 wife confidered under different afpects, which  
 expreffed its different modifications, and which  
 were in like manner perfonified.

**Rhea.** **RHEA** fignified matter pre-exiftent, eternal,  
 fufceptible of all forms, without having recei-  
 ved any, and including the germs of every  
 thing previous to their developement by the  
 creative mind. She has been often confound-  
 ed with Ceres, with Cybele, and with Ops, who  
 were very different deities, as we fhall fee in the  
 fequel.

**Latona.**

**BEFORE** the univerfe was formed, there was  
 nothing but Night: ſhe brooded with her wings  
 over matter. "Night, fays the Poet\*, ancient  
 "night, the origin of all things, it is thee I fing;  
 "thee,"

\* Orpheus.

"thee the mother of men and gods." Her praises were thrice repeated in the sacred hymns. The great Artist of the world addresses her in the midst of the silence of nature, and requests her counsel: "Mother of the gods, says he, what answer dost thou give me? I would that all things may constitute one whole, and yet that every thing may separately exist \*." Her worship was held in great veneration; the people of antiquity erected altars to her honour; and many of them, in consideration of her having preceded the day, reckoned time by the nights; a custom still found among some of the northern inhabitants of Europe †. The Greeks adored her under the name of Latona. They feigned that she was born in the hyperborean regions, that is, in those distant climes which they conceived to be involved in perpetual darkness. Latona wandering, persecuted, and overcome with fatigue, represents nature at the moment of the birth of the world. She finds no resting-place in the universe, which is still under the dominion of Chaos. Delos alone, in the midst of this vast ocean, presents itself; it is

\* Eschembachius in *Epigene orphico*.

† The English still retain *Sevenight* and *Fortnight*.

**CHAPTER** is the central point round which the productions  
**I.** of nature are arranged. Here the Goddess  
 lands, and confides to it her precious burthen.

**Love.**

THE time accordingly arrives for the birth of the world. Night deposits an egg in the womb of Erebus ; the igneous spirit fecundates it ; Love is then born, and rises from it shaking his torch. " O Love ! thou powerful deity, symbol of order and of harmony ! thy youth is the youth of nature in all its vigour, and thy beauty shall last while her's endures." As he advances, matter assumes a new appearance ; every thing announces the destruction of the reign of Chaos ; the war of the elements ceases, and they assume the places assigned to each. Torrents of light inundate space ; life is universally diffused ; animals start up as if awakened from a long sleep ; and at once appear the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the wonders of nature.

**Venus.**

MATTER thus modified, issuing from the hands of the creator, and arrayed in the most beautiful diversity of forms, was called Venus. At the name of this goddess, the most elegant thoughts, and most attracting ideas take possession



session of the fancy. Venus displays her Cestus, and every thing that lives is captivated with her beauty. She disarms the God of War, she dissipates the storm, she arrests the thunder. At her presence the air becomes calm and serene, the earth is adorned with all the riches of vegetation. In the woods, on the mountains, in the bosom of the liquid plain, multitudes of living creatures yield to the sweet propensity that leads them to perpetuate their kind, and to celebrate the mother of nature. In the portraiture of these images her true origin was insensibly forgotten. She, whom the disciple of Epicurus invoked, and whom he regarded as the principle of things, became the Goddess of Pleasure. Love was held to be her son, the charming boy that had accompanied her from the moment of her birth. The Graces formed her train, and marched before her car. She was chiefly adored at Gnidos, at Paphos, in the groves of Idalia, and in all the happy climates where spring is perpetual. There every thing united to inebriate the senses. The grateful perfume of the flowers, suspended in festoons at the gates of her temple; the pure incense that arose

## CHAPTER

## I.



## CHAPTER

## I.



night and day upon her altars; the melting music of her nymphs, and their impassioned dances, conspired to intoxicate the soul with voluptuous desires. The avenue to her temple was defended by a bower of myrtle, the thick foliage of which concealed the tender mysteries of the place. It was said that the Goddess herself descended to behold the felicity of her votaries, and that she quitted Olympus to visit these fortunate retreats. But though she returned, drawn by her faithful doves, to the palace of the immortals, she seemed still to be present in the sanctuary where her image was erected. Her statue, the work of Praxiteles, attracted universal admiration, and even sometimes excited the delirium of passion\*. One of the most beautiful pictures of Apelles was that in which he represented this Goddess at the instant, when emerging from the sea, she first appeared to the new-born world. Time, which has preyed on the master-pieces of ancient painting, has respected the more durable monuments of sculpture. Amongst those which at present are the glory of Italy, the Venus of Medicis

\* Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 36. C. 5.

Medicis is the chief, and commands the applause of every beholder.

CHAPTER  
I.

HITHERTO we have considered the two principles apart ; we proceed now to view them united, and tending by their reciprocal action to the same object.

Union of  
the two  
principles.

IN the act of creation, or rather of the formation of the world, they were signified by the name of Proteus ; a venerable old man, maintaining a double character : while his profound wisdom embraced the past, the present, and the future, his different metamorphoses represented the innumerable combinations of the elements. By turns a lioness, a tiger, or a dragon ; sometimes assuming the appearance of a brilliant flame, sometimes of a rapid river, he sported with the vain curiosity of mortals, and eluded their search. Perseverance and courage united, alone could overcome him, or obtain from him his secrets, which were nothing but those of nature herself.

Proteus

AT last the universe, considered in its various relations, and composed of two substances, both of them eternal and infinite, but incapable of a

## CHAPTER

## I

♦♦♦♦♦

Pan.

separate existence, became what was called, by way of eminence, *the living being*. Matter and its parts are the members of this great body ; and the soul that moves it, which gives it an expansive force, is the superior intelligence or mind. In this sense was the world considered as God by the antients ; it was called the GREAT WHOLE. Pan represented the world thus personified. Invested with a robe bespangled with stars, he held in his hand a pipe of seven reeds, a symbol of the wonderful order in which the planets revolve in their orbits. In Egypt, he was one of the chief and most ancient divinities. He held at first, the same rank among the Greeks. By Orpheus, he is celebrated as the supreme God, the universal Substance, the Creator of all things : but, in the perpetual revolutions to which mythology was exposed, he insensibly lost something of his dignity. His worship was hardly preserved, except in the country ; for, in the simplicity of pastoral life, men, wholly intent upon labour, renounce with difficulty the opinions they have once entertained. It is thus that the religion, the history of which we are now relating, after having yielded to the persecutions raised against it in the cities,

took



took refuge in the villages; whence the title of Paganism, by which it is known: in like manner, Pan was held in singular veneration among the Arcadians, because the situation of their country prevented them from intercourse with the flourishing cities of Greece, and they long remained attached to their antient customs; for in the second century of our æra, we find their year still consisting of four months\*. Pan was considered by this people as the ruler of universal nature; but he became, at the same time, the tutelary deity of the fields and the forests. His head was crowned with branches of the pine-tree, and he took pleasure in roaming through the groves of Menalus and the woods of Lycæus. Pan loved the flocks, and he favoured the shepherds: His flute now no longer expressed the harmony of the spheres, but the plaintive voice of his mistress, the beautiful Syrinx, who had been changed into a reed. Of the stalks that formed the delicate limbs of the nymph he made a pipe, and taught the shepherds the art of music.

THE same causes that had in some measure degraded

\* Plutarch. in Numa.



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## I.

Recapitula-  
tion of the  
Gods of the  
first class.

degraded Pan in the popular opinion, had a similar influence on the other gods of the first class. The people preferred the animated descriptions and agreeable fictions of poetry, to the abstract ideas of which the Gods were the symbols. But the primitive notions were not altered: while the religion subsisted, they composed its essence; and by them was the first origin of things explained. Vulcan, Minerva, Vesta, Hecate, and Nemesis represented the supreme being, either considered in himself, or in his attributes. Under the notion of Rhea, of Latona, of Venus, and of Love, matter took successively every form of which it is susceptible; in fine, both principles, united in Pan or in Proteus, composed the assemblage of all created beings.

Gods of the  
second or-  
der.

THE infinite mind that informs the whole of matter, that gave it impulse, and that maintains it, is the author of all the particular movements from which the general motion results. He sustains the heaven, the earth, the moon, and the stars. Man and all organized bodies owe their existence to him; or rather, he himself is the principle that animates them. Being extended through all space, the differ-  
ent

ent portions of that mind formed so many separate intelligences or powers, that directed the various operations of nature. They performed a multitude of different functions, all conspiring to produce one end. They did not differ from the supreme divinity, for they were an emanation from him. Each power had a peculiar province and function assigned to him, and was worshipped as a god. These powers compose the Gods of the second order, whose history is a portraiture of the principal phenomena that surround us, and which are all referable to the soul of the world, multiplied in name and in form. When, for example, the people of antiquity, struck with the splendid magnificence of the sun, and with the inestimable advantages which the earth receives from his heat, had erected altars to him, they not only worshipped the luminary himself, but the mind that directed his course, who alone dispenses light, and whom the imagination delights to represent under the idea of a Hero or a Conqueror. The same thing may be affirmed with regard to their adoration of the other celestial bodies; and here we behold physics and theology united, exhibiting a magnificent spectacle, and mutually elucidating each

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each other. Thus, the state of the sciences at that epocha may explain to us the meaning of many fables, which we would in vain endeavour to find out without such assistance ; and, on the other hand, in order to judge of the progress of human knowledge at that period, we have only to examine the sacred traditions, after divesting them of the marvellous with which they are accompanied.

Cybele.

ALL the bodies that compose the visible universe successively issued from the bosom of Chaos. The first that appeared in the order of this progressive formation was the globe that we inhabit. The earth contains all the elements, all seeds and their productions, and its surface presents the most agreeable diversity. Here, the fire with which it is impregnated unites into one great body, and overpowering all opposition, produces those shocks and convulsions that seem to presage the destruction of nature. There, immense reservoirs are formed, by which the rivers are supplied with those waters which they continually pour into the basin of the sea. If the eye sometimes can perceive nothing but arid mountains that hide their summits in the clouds, uncultivated plains,

or



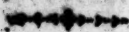
or deserts covered with snow; yet it oftener rests on regions variegated with green hills and fertile plains, where flowers and fruits abound, and multitudes of living creatures find at once plenty and security. How beautiful is the Earth adorned with all her riches! how justly is she entitled to our homage, whose liberal hand supplies all our wants! Accordingly, she was declared the common mother of gods and men. By procuring to men their subsistence, it may be said that she united them, and that she formed the bond of the earliest society. The external rites of her worship had a reference to this happy establishment. The towers with which her head was crowned represented the walls of a city. She was drawn by lions, to denote her ascendancy over the most barbarous hearts. When her image with pompous solemnity passed along, the people prostrated themselves in crowds before her car, and invoked the powerful Cybele. Her path was strewn with flowers, and the sound of brazen cymbals signified that of the implements of husbandry, before the precious discovery of iron; while armed priests danced before her chariot, rent the air with their cries, and sometimes in their transports turned their  
fury

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fury against themselves, making the blood to stream from the wounds which their madness inflicted. By this they meant to shew, that labour was the lot of man; that without industry the goddess bestows not her gifts, and that her treasures are not to be enjoyed, if they are not taken by violence.

Ops

THE Earth was invoked by the name of Ops, when, adorned with all her riches, and yielding her fruits in abundance, she recompensed the laborious efforts of the husbandman.

Uranus.

THE Earth, suspended in the middle of space, was considered as the centre of the world. She was supposed to be married to the Heaven which encompasses her, whose motions seem to be subordinate to her, who appears to descend in order to unite with her, and who by his soft dews and salutary emanations, deposits in the bosom of his happy spouse the seeds of fecundity. Uranus had a great number of children, amongst whom were ranked the constellations, as well as all the bodies that sparkle in the circle of heaven.

THE

THE spheres were hardly put in motion when Time was born. Eternity is an indivisible whole, which admits no numerical succession, which remains always full and entire, whether matter has existence or not. Time, on the contrary, the idea of which cannot be disjoined from that of motion, and which enters as a constituent part in its definition, is susceptible of an infinity of divisions. We cannot conceive a body changing place, without considering at the same time the velocity with which it moves, the space it passes through, and the time it takes to accomplish its motion. These three things are so intimately connected together, that one of them necessarily supposes the other two, and on their different combinations depends the whole doctrine of forces. Take away motion, and you annihilate time, which is lost in eternity. But the impulse being once given, it proceeds with equal step. Hours, years, and ages, succeed one another without interruption, as wave succeeds to wave. Time changes the bed of the sea; it overwhelms the largest continents; it levels the highest mountains: time conspires the fall of empires and general devastation. It was therefore represented under the figure of an old man with a scythe.

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Saturn.



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a scythe. The hard-hearted Saturn devours every thing without sparing his own children. He dared to lift a sacrilegious hand against his father, and deprive him of the distinctive marks of his sex, because, when he appeared in the world, nature had ceased to propagate. This memorable epoch leads us back to the birth of the world. It is proper here to remark, that the ancients always introduced man into their pictures, that they might render them interesting. Let us now then suppose ourselves transported to those early ages, at the happy time when the earth spontaneously yielded the richest fruits and most abundant harvests, and when the purest nectar flowed in never-failing streams. Then the passions never broke forth into violence; then Justice lifted aloft her scale; for as yet, no laws were engraven on tables of brass. O happy age, age of innocence and peace! Alas, it never existed but in the fancy of poets; yet the charming descriptions they have given of it, though they may excite our regret, yet they flatter our imagination, and seem to console us under the evils of life. Saturn was the god of the age of gold. When crimes, increasing with the social state, had driven him insensibly from all the countries

tries where he was adored, he took refuge in Aufonia, among a simple people, who had preserved the purity of their manners, and who alone were worthy to afford him an asylum.

If there is any way of forming an exact idea of time, it is by applying it to a regular motion. The course of the stars alone could serve to measure it; and therefore the ancients paid particular attention to that celestial body, the motion of which is most remarkable. Hence the fable of Saturn enchained by Jupiter.

THE Sun is the most magnificent ornament of the universe. Placed in the centre of those immense orbs which he alone directs, he is the king, he is the father of nature. When he appears, every thing is enlivened and wears a new face. He rejoices the savage in the midst of the desert, and the man of polished life in the bosom of luxury and opulence. Who indeed is he, whose soul has not experienced a lively emotion, a noble enthusiasm, when he has seen the east brightening into flame, and the glorious god of day emerging from the sea to begin his course; or, when  
arrayed

Worship of  
the Sun.

**CHAPTER** arrayed in gold, he plunges in the western  
**I.** wave? All hail! majestic Star, exhaustless  
~~Source of Light, Principle of Life and of Fecun-~~  
 dity!—The whole world is full of thy presence,  
 and is indebted to thee for its beauty—Thy  
 praise has resounded in both its hemispheres—  
 Thou art celebrated, not only in the climates  
 which thou enrichest with thy gifts, but in the  
 burning sands of the torrid zone, in the frozen  
 regions of the poles, in those gloomy abodes  
 which would be condemned to the rigour of  
 eternal winter, if it were not for the influence  
 of thy enlivening beams. The ancient na-  
 tions, out of gratitude, erected altars to the  
 sun. They celebrated his auspicious return,  
 when arrayed in all his splendour he opened  
 the gates of the year; and they resigned them-  
 selves to grief and dejection when, feeble and  
 languid, and retiring by degrees, he seemed to  
 be despoiled of his lustre. In every season, at  
 each new revolution, he was worshipped under  
 names that were characteristically expressive  
 of the different points of his course. Hence  
 came the variety of signs by which he was re-  
 presented, and which have induced some authors  
 to refer all the divinities of fable to the sun\*.

IN

\* Macrobius, Gebelin.



IN describing the course of the Sun, he was represented as a conqueror famous for his exploits, whom the greatest obstacles and most imminent dangers could not appal; who engaged every enemy, and who was always victorious. But who were the monsters that opposed him in his course? How shall we explain that tribe of chimerical beings through whom he had to fight his way?

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Fables relative to the Sun.

FROM astronomy alone we must receive our information. The object of this science, which originated among nations employed in husbandry, was, at first, to direct the labours of the field. The first cultivators soon perceived that they needed a guide, and they sought for one in the sky. That innumerable multitude of stars with which it is bespangled presented them with a confused mass: these stars were reduced to order; they were distinguished from one another and arranged. At first, the celestial canopy was divided into three principal parts; that in the middle called the Zodiac, was contained in the plane of the orbits which the sun and the stars describe. This zone was bounded on each side by two great regions, one on the south, the other on the north.

Origin of the constellations.

D

The

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The stars were next reduced to classes, and groups were composed, that, under the name of Constellations, received each a particular form and denomination. Thus the firmament was peopled with men, with animals, and figures of every kind. These signs which have been transmitted to us, and which seem now so uncouth, were not however the mere creation of fancy: they signified the state of the earth in the different seasons of the year; they connected as it were the operations of husbandry with the celestial phenomena, and served at once as a rural calendar and an astronomical one. It is only by viewing them in this light that we can investigate their origin; and as soon as we have discovered the people that invented them, we shall have no difficulty in understanding one of the principal branches of the ancient mythology, and at the same time in fixing the epoch of its institution.

Different opinions on this subject.

PERHAPS no subject has given rise to so many different conjectures. We do not mean here to mention that author who conceived the twelve signs to represent the twelve sons of Jacob\*; nor Olaus Rudbeck, who found the

\* Acad. des bel. let. tom. 5. hist. p. 31.

the first rudiments of the sphere among the Samoyeds and Laplanders. They who have attributed the invention of the celestial signs to the Greeks, have not been aware that that people, in some measure moderns in the history of the world, were also novices in science; that though nature endowed them with a lively and brilliant imagination, yet it is certain that they invented little, and that their only merit is the having transmitted to future generations the discoveries made long before their times. Though this opinion therefore, is embraced by the most respectable authorities, though it was adopted by Newton himself, we are however obliged to reject it. A writer of the fourth century \*, whose works that remain are full of excellent matter, is the first who elucidated this subject. It is true, indeed, that he confines himself to a very small number of explanations, and that his ideas stand in need of being illustrated. This the Abbé Pluche undertook to do †. He followed the track that Macrobius had pointed out, and he endeavoured, on the same principles, to explain the origin of the greater part of the constellations. Not

Opinion of  
Macrobius,

and of the  
Abbé  
Pluche,

D 2

being

\* Macrobius.

† Histoire du ciel.



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being able to adapt them to the climate of Egypt, he concludes that the zodiac had been traced out in the plains of Sennaar, where he was determined to fix the birth-place of all human knowledge. But his system, however plausible it may at first view appear, falls of itself when examined, and we shall immediately see how directly opposite it is to the simplest notions of astronomy.

Defects of  
it.

It is proved that the poles, the solstitial, and equinoctial points, have a very slow retrograde motion, by which they are carried from East to West. This motion, which amounts to about fifty seconds in a year, is called the Precession of the Equinoxes. Now, as the fixed stars are immoveable, it follows that they always seem more and more to depart from the points of the ecliptic, and, consequently, that the constellations are perpetually changing place. Thus, for example, the sign Arles, which three hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ was in conjunction with the Sun at the vernal equinox, is now several degrees removed from him \*; and the other signs, as

they

\* In the time of Hipparchus, about 150 years before Christ,

they preserve the same relative distances, have necessarily followed the same revolution. Now, what ought we to think of the Abbé Pluche and others, who have overlooked an observation of such importance? To avoid falling into an error so gross, people have been willing to believe that the zodiac is a late institution. But if we rest satisfied with such a conclusion, we shall never discover the country in which the zodiac was invented, nor be able to give any probable explication of the emblems it contains: besides, insurmountable difficulties remain, after every different climate has been investigated in order to support the opinion. It has been reserved for a writer of our own times \* to banish all such contradictions, to unite the most opposite suppositions, and to establish a theory at once simple and instructive.

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I.

AMONGST the signs of the zodiac there are some that have, as it were, a common relation

D 3

to

How it has  
been recti-  
fied by M.  
Dupuis.

Christ, the longitude of the first Star in *Aries* was  $3^{\circ} 20'$  in 1750 it was  $29^{\circ} 41'$ . That Star is therefore now in the portion of the ecliptic called *Taurus*, the first Star of *Taurus* is in *Gemini*, and so of the rest.

\* M. Dupuis, *Memoires sur l'origine des Fables*.

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to every country of the earth. Such are those that represent the course and effects of that luminary which shines upon all; and of these it is difficult to mistake the signification. Thus, the Crab (*Cancer*) and the Goat (*Capricornus*) that represent the boundaries of the sun's path, have always served to denote the solstices; and Macrobius, who has caught the meaning of these two emblems, has only been deceived in the application he has made of them. In the same manner the Balance (*Libra*) which represents the equinox, is a very natural image of the equality of the days and nights. But the other signs were peculiar to certain nations, The Ram (*Aries*) the Bull (*Taurus*) which were associated with the labours of rural life, and the Virgin (*Virgo*) who held in her hand a stalk of corn, are signs evidently relative to agriculture, the practice of which varies in different countries. Lastly, some, as the Archer (*Sagittarius*) the Fishes (*Pisces*) the Urn (*Aquarius*) must be referred to particular circumstances that also vary in every climate. To discover, therefore, the origin of these signs, it was necessary to find a country in which the different operations of husbandry and the state of the earth should exactly correspond with the symbols representing



representing them; while, at the same time, the state of the sky might be explained in such a manner as to leave no doubt. In order to obtain this essential correspondence between the rural and astronomical signs, it was only necessary to make a slight alteration in the position of the sphere. M. Dupuis observes, that the vernal equinox is that which at first would particularly engage the attention of mankind; that it was represented by the expressive symbol of a *balance*, and that it was a long time before this came to signify the equality of the day and night at the autumnal equinox. Then carrying his views back to former ages, he gives this sign the place that had been originally assigned to it, and from which the precession alone had removed it. He gives also to the zodiac a retrograde motion, without however changing the established order of the signs; the *Goat* quits the Winter solstice; the year begins with the *Crab*; and as to the other signs, nothing is more easy than to find their application. It is in Egypt alone that they can be explained. To be convinced of this, it will be sufficient to examine them successively in the several stations occupied by each.

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## I.

Explanati-  
on of the  
signs of the  
Zodiac.

THE point of the Sun's departure had been fixed originally at the Summer solstice. When arrived at this height, he could not be more aptly compared than to the animal that delights in climbing the highest mountains and most precipitous rocks. The *Goat* was therefore chosen for the emblem. It was represented in conjunction with a fish, because at that time the Nile began to issue from its bed. The overflowing of this river was figured by *Aquarius*, or a *Genius* holding an urn; because then Egypt resembled a vast sea, in which cities and villages, elevated with immense labour, shewed themselves like islands. *Pisces* represented the inactive life of the inhabitants, at that time enjoying tranquillity within their walls. Thus, in every month of the inundation, a symbol was imagined relative to the phenomenon. The three that follow are not less significant. When the waters retired, the earth was still too moist and too full of mud to receive the impression of the plough; but it was soon covered with grass, and afforded excellent pasture. The flocks were admitted to it when the *Ram* appeared. The next that followed was the *Bull*, an emblem of tillage. Scarcely had the fields received the seed when  
plants

plants sprung forth on every hand. These new productions appeared in the eyes of the husbandman like *young children*, (*Gemini*) or like *kids*, that were soon to constitute his wealth. The Sun, after continuing dally to recede, at last ceases to fly, and soon begins to return. His course, like that of the *crab*, may be properly termed retrograde at this time, and not as has been said, at the time of the solstice, when, as we have already seen, his motion began. The sign of the *Goat* is still less applicable to him, when he is at the lowest point of his course; but Macrobius judged of the position of the signs according to that which took place at his day; and it is not surprising that he should have been deceived by allusions which at first sight seem exceedingly plausible. A month after the Winter solstice, the fruits of the earth arrive at maturity; and every thing presents the image of an abundant harvest. The Lion (*Leo*) was made use of to point the yellow colour of the fields, or rather vegetation in full vigour. Reaping time, which in Egypt happens in March, was announced by a young virgin (*Virgo*) holding in her hand a sheaf of corn. This sign is one of those on account of which



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which the Egyptians were denied the honour of having invented the zodiac. The Balance is found here, in its true place, to indicate the most brilliant epoch of the year, the season which ought to be the most interesting to every people. The pestilential diseases that prevail in Egypt during the month of April are characterized by the Scorpion (*Scorpio*). Lastly, the *Arrow*, with which *Sagittarius* is armed, announced the return of the Etesian winds; perhaps also, that time of the year in which the earth, requiring no labour, men might engage themselves in the chase, or in military exercises.

THIS simple explanation of the signs of the zodiac leaves no room to doubt of their origin, nor of the epoch of their institution. In the same way might the other constellations be explained, in which the symbolical genius is equally displayed. All the nations of antiquity adopted these learned emblems, which had been traced out in the countries of Upper Egypt by a masterly hand, perhaps long before the formation of the vallies watered by the Nile.

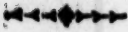
ASTRONOMY had been cultivated for ages, when at last it gave birth to a religion that consecrated its labours, and which, by revealing to men the secrets of nature, led them gradually to the knowledge of a Supreme Being. The establishment of this worship is as ancient as the times in which the *Bull* possessed the vernal equinox, and the *Lion* the Summer solstice; that is to say, about 2500 years before our vulgar æra. Thus, these two signs were of great account in the theology of the the ancient nations; the first especially, which announced to them the renovation of nature. The Persians considered the Equinoctial Bull as the visible power that moved the spheres. Its worship, which still subsists in Japan, was connected, among the Greeks, with all their fables; and the author of the *Georgicks*, when he teaches his countrymen the precepts of agriculture, recalls to their minds the rank which it anciently occupied; for, in his poem, this sign comes with its golden horns to open the year. At this period of the institution of mythology every thing wore a new face. The symbols of the sphere preserved their primitive signification; but they now assumed a character much more august. They were translated  
into

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Application  
of astro-  
nomy to re-  
ligion.

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into the sacred language, and the aspects of the celestial bodies gave occasion to those fables and those singular adventures which poetry afterwards embellished with all the charms of fancy and fiction. The stars were worshipped as so many divinities; or rather the intelligence that directed them, and which we have said was considered as an emanation from the great soul of the universe, was adored in each.

Dionysus.

THAT intelligence which guided the Sun was represented under the idea of a hero and a conqueror. Dionysus was the spirit who actuated that luminary, he dwelt with it in its brilliant abodes, and accompanied it in its course through the zodiac. He was in no respect different from Osiris, the Sun of the Egyptians, who also, in their tongue, signified *the cause of time* \*. This God, they said, was born in the Spring, with the year itself, when the Bull was the first of the celestial signs. He was nursed by the Hyades, the most brilliant stars of that constellation, and was often painted with the horns of a bull. He received existence in the midst of thunder, because at that

\* Herodotus.



that season this meteor begins to appear, after having been extinguished during Winter. His journey lasted three years, a number which corresponded with that of the seasons in the East. Leading in his suite a numerous band of Satyrs and of Centaurs, he flies to the conquest of India. His arrival at the solstice is figured by his amours with the beautiful Nicé, whose name signifies *Victory*, and who lived on a high mountain, having beside her a lion tamed. At the autumnal equinox, under the sign of the Scorpion, he arrives at Thrace; when, to shun the snares of the King Lycurgus, he is forced to throw himself into the sea. This part of his history is easily explained with the assistance of the sphere, as well as the death of Icarus and of Erigone, and the hard fate of Pentheus torn in pieces by the hands of his own mother. In proportion as Dionysus advances, his face changes its aspect, and assumes successively the several appearances that mark the progress of time, to denote the several states in which the Sun is seen \*. Young at first, and of a dazzling beauty, his features become gradually stronger, and at last are disfigured with

the

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\* Macrobius.

**CHAPTER** the wrinkles of age. At the Winter solstice  
**I.** he seems a child, whom insolent sailors despise,  
 and with whom they sport at their pleasure.  
 The Dolphin is raised into heaven to be a monument of their punishment. After having subdued the most distant regions, he resumes the road of Europe, and the nymph Aura, of whom he is enamoured, announces his happy return.

**Hercules.** SUCH was the emblem that marked the Genius of the Sun and his course. Hercules signified in a more particular manner the power of that luminary. "All-powerful and invincible, this  
 "haughty warrior traverses the world from  
 "East to West, and never fails to prove victorious in the most terrible conflicts \*." How many monsters vanquished, how many labours accomplished, are the eternal monuments of his courage!

**His labours.** Two enormous serpents he strangled in his cradle as the sports of his infancy. The conquest of the Nemean lion, the discomfiture of the hydra with its hundred heads, and the

trout

\* Orpheus

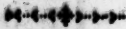
front of the formidable band of centaurs, are his first exploits. He surpasses in swiftness the hind with the golden horns. The frightful noise of his clarion chases away the birds of the lake Stymphale. He turns the course of a river through the stable of Augeas.—But greater labours still await him. His victorious hands deliver Crete from the furious bull. He tames in Thrace the horses of Diomedæ, that breathed fire from their nostrils. Beyond the Black Sea, in the country of the Cimmerians, their bravest warriors cannot resist him; and their Queen Hippolyte is forced to deliver to him the girdle of the Amazons. Before finishing his career he runs to Iberia, to wrest the horrid cattle from Geryon, and then he erects two columns at the ends of the earth. Braving the powers of hell, he subdues the treble-headed dog that guarded the entrance; and, finally, returns covered with glory from the rivers of Africa, bringing apples of gold from the gardens of the Hesperides.

THESE labours that made this god so famous were a lively and animated representation of the annual course of the Sun. The victory over the lion indicates his arrival at the Summer



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## I



mer solstice. The equinoctial Bull was evidently signified by that of the island of Crete. These indeed are the only labours that can be referred to the signs of the zodiac. This has been overlooked by M. Gebelin, who has relied on the evidence of language, without taking facts for his guide. The derangement occasioned by the precession of the equinoxes is sufficient to overturn the most ingenious endeavours to apply the other labours of Hercules to these signs. But when the sphere is in its proper position, all these emblems perfectly correspond with the extrazodiacal constellations which at that ancient period marked the passage of the Sun in each sign.

Other Gods  
relative to  
the Sun.

We have considered this luminary as a hero who, traversing the vast expanse of heaven, and returning to the spot from which he began his course, embraces the whole in the circle he describes. But he was also considered as the father of the days, of the months, and of the seasons, and his heat as the principle of generation. In these respects he seemed altogether a different personage. Sometimes he appeared resplendent with light, and vivifying all things with his presence; sometimes with a gloomy

gloomy countenance, inspiring sorrow and terror. His functions and attributes varied incessantly, according to the different aspects in which he was seen.

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THERE were but three seasons in the East. Jupiter, Pluto, and Neptune, who divided the empire of the world, represented the Sun at these principal epochs.

JUPITER is the first and most eminent of all. Seated on high, he hath erected his throne above the clouds. Thence he contemplates the sea, the shores, and the numerous people that cover them. Strength resides at his feet. When he lifts the arm of vengeance, thunder and lightning announce the God: but a single look dispells the tempest. Thus the Sun was represented in Summer, when he is high in the firmament, and reigns there unrivalled and alone. When he has reached the most elevated point of his course, he seems to enjoy the contemplation of his glory, and his power is boundless. If he sometimes condenses the vapours that give birth to the thunder, his beams soon restore calmness and serenity. Dazzled with his splendour, the nations of antiquity

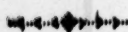
E

Jupiter.

considered

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considered him as the greatest of the gods; even his name signified *the Being* \*. All things are full of Jove, says the poet, and every thing depends upon him. Who can be compared to Jupiter? "Immortal powers, says he, "league all your forces against me: let down "from this celestial mansion the golden chain "which embraces the earth, the ocean, and "the heaven; your feeble efforts can never "draw me down, but I can pull you up; I "can fix the chain to the summit of Olym- "pus, and leave the whole universe suspend- "ed †." A sublime description of the Sun and of his effects, whether with Plato we apply the passage to his motion, or with Pope to his attractive force. There still exist monuments in which Jupiter is painted in the middle of the zodiacal signs. For a symbol he had an eagle, the most remarkable of the feathered race for the ferocity of its nature and the sublimity of its flight. Sometimes he was confounded with Ether, or the matter of light. We shall not enter into the detail of

his

\* *Jou* signifies the Supreme God, the Being, by way of eminence. It is the same with the *Jove* of the Latins and the *Jehovah* of the Jews.

† Homer.



his different metamorphoses, nor of the singular adventures that have been attributed to him; we shall only endeavour to point out the manner in which they may be explained. Callisto, Danae, Leda, Ganymede, and indeed all those characters who make such a conspicuous figure in the history of his life, are in the number of the constellations; and it is easy to see that he has been the source of all the fables invented concerning them. Accordingly, he never lost any of his original dignity. Notwithstanding the apparent extravagance of some of his actions, he never became less great, or less worthy of the homage and admiration of the people.

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THE Sun hardly reaches the inferior signs, when his force diminishes by degrees, and he dispenses but a feeble light. Here begins the empire of night, and the sceptre of the world is committed to the hands of Pluto. Vast subterraneous caverns shut out from the light of the Sun; a faint gleam shooting its feeble ray through the abyss; pale shades flitting through the dismal regions; the pitiless monarch that rules them; and, lastly, the frightful image of Destruction, represented the time in which nature

Pluto,

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appears plunged in sorrow; when every thing languishes and dies; and when the generative power is unable to disengage itself from the shackles that restrain it.

Neptune.

THIS is the time when the elements are at war. Neptune, who presides in the rainy season, is the god of the waves. He agitates the billows of the ocean, he commands the rivers to roll back to their sources, he shakes the earth to its centre. At the waving of the terrible trident Pluto himself is appalled, and trembles in the heart of his infernal domain *.

ALLEGORIES such as these are found almost in every nation. Winter, personified under the name of Typhon, of Ahriman, or of some malevolent being, such as Pluto was among the Greeks, is always victorious; and the defeat of his antagonist affects the heart of man with unfeigned regret. Egypt and Phenicia resounded with cries of grief, when the people, in the ceremonies of Ofiris, Adonis †, and Ormusd, lamented the fate of the Sun about to expire

* Homer.

† Selden de diis Syris. syntag. 2.

expire. Even among the modern Persians, though they are obedient to the law of Mahomet, he is the object of their lamentation, when, calling on Hossein, with a loud voice they deplore his loss *. Other nations, who have adopted these ancient ceremonies, have only applied them to a greater object. After the struggles in which the good principle is overcome, he is again recalled to life, and the nations change their accents of grief into songs of triumph. They celebrate the renovated vigour of the god, issuing victoriously from the darkness of night, and gladdening the world with juvenile splendour.

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THE Sun, whatever change he may undergo in his annual course, never fails to dispense his diurnal benignity. Every day he rises above the horizon, mounts to his destined place, and then descends, having compleated his revolution. Apollo, who is represented to us adorned with all the graces of youth, was commissioned to enlighten the world. The Hours opened to him the gates of the East, and every evening he went to repose in the bosom of Thetis. He was drawn in a magnificent cha-

Apollo;

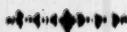
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riot,

* Chardin.

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riot, and the horses obeyed his voice alone. Once he entrusted the reins to imprudent hands, and the universe was on the point of being destroyed. This fable, if we believe M. Dupuis, is purely astronomical; or, perhaps, it served to perpetuate the memory of some revolution that had happened to the globe. The rays were signified by arrows which were fatal and unerring. The God revenged on a whole people an insult offered to his priest Chryses. The children of Niobe fell a sacrifice to his wrath. But he boasted especially of his victory over the serpent Python. The instant of that monster's death has been chosen by the artist of that incomparable statue*, which time has respected, and which is now the most beautiful ornament of a city enriched with the spoils of ancient Greece. Apollo has just shot his arrow, and enjoys his triumph. What grandeur and majesty are diffused over his whole figure! Never was deity more sublimely represented, and never has man been able to conceive so godlike a form. At the sight of this master-piece, the people prostrated themselves, and in holy transport cried, Io, Io

PÆAN.

* The Apollo Belvedere.

ÆEAN *. From the extremities of the earth people resorted in crowds to the temple of Delphi, where the sacred fire was kept alive, and where the wisdom of the God was communicated in oracles. Above this city was Parnassus, and the sources of Aganippe and Hypocrene, so celebrated by the poets. He alone who enlightens the world was worthy of kindling the celestial flame, the symbol of genius. Apollo, when reduced to tend the flocks of Admetus, taught men the art of uniting the melody of the voice to the harmony of the lyre. He was the father of Orpheus, the first of musicians. He inspired the author of the Iliad, dictated his verses, and consigned him to immortality.

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THE Sun was also adored under other names characteristic of his power and beneficence. As the God of Physic, it was from him that suffering humanity expected relief. Esculapius, the son of Apollo, presided over this salutary art. His symbol was a Serpent, the worship of which had been generally diffused. It would perhaps be difficult to account for the

Esculapius.

E 4

fingular

* **Callimachus.**

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singular veneration which the ancients entertained for this animal. It makes a great article in the theogony of every people. It had altars in Egypt, in India, in Phenicia. From the sacred precincts of Epidaurus, it was transported to the banks of the Tiber * ; it was every where invoked by the sick, and every where the emblem of health. Perhaps, because this animal every year changes its skin, it was thought to be regenerated. Thus, it recalled the idea of the sun, who is annually restored to new life, and whose oblique course is not unaptly represented by the wreathings of a snake †.

Priapus.

LASTLY, the Sun is the source and principle of fecundity. His heat penetrates all bodies, vivifies and developes the germs by which they are reproduced. The god invoked at Lampfacus signified the generative faculty: he was considered as the author of those voluptuous sensations that impell living creatures to perpetuate their kind. Let us draw a veil over this deity, and over the attributes that distinguish him. His emblems, originally intended

* Valer, Max.

† Macrobius.

tended to paint the greatest operations of nature, offered nothing offensive to modesty. But when the simplicity of manners was lost, these were debased by licentiousness, and made to minister to the corrupt inclinations of a people whom luxury had depraved.

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AFTER having contemplated the universe, embellished by the magnificence of the Sun, man turned his eyes to the brilliant satellite that accompanies this earth, which, every month, enriches it with its presence, and the course of which presents such remarkable phenomena. Its disk, at first hardly visible, gradually increases, then grows less by degrees, and at last disappears, till it again returns and again dispenses its mild light. These different aspects were personified. The Moon became the sister and the wife of the Sun; she was called the Queen of the world; her power was celebrated; and the different names she received, characterize the various forms which the Moon successively assumes.

The Moon.

Divinities
that represented it.

THE intelligence that was assigned to her as the principle of her motion was the famous
Isis,

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 Io, or Isis.

Argus.

Isis *, one of the chief divinities of the Egyptians, and who has often been confounded with nature herself. She was originally named Io, and from her the adventures of the celebrated nymph of Argolis are derived. The metamorphoses she underwent in Greece must be referred to the ancient theological ideas. She was changed into a heifer, because the genius that moved the spheres always took the form of that animal, which was the first of the signs, and which made a part of every fable. Argus was employed to watch her. That monster with his hundred eyes, of which one half always remained open while the other was shut in sleep, represented the firmament. After having traversed various climates, Io arrived on the banks of the Nile, where she was restored to her original shape.

THERE is not, perhaps, any spectacle more enchanting than that of a clear night, when the Moon shines in all her splendour, and advances in silent majesty through the stars. Nature has at that time resigned the variety of her colours, and their shades have disappeared; but the placid light shed on every object is perhaps

* Diodor. Siculus. Jablonski.

perhaps not less attractive, whether it is reflected from the bosom of the smooth wave, or illuminates the contour of the objects around. The summits of the mountains exhibit a splendid amphitheatre, while the woods below form a darker shade. The general calm that reigns throughout nature, the solemn silence, so propitious to thought and solitary meditation, and which is only disturbed by the plaintive sounds of sorrow, or the tender accents of love, adapt the mind to every soft impression.

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IN this state, the Moon was painted under the features of the most august of the goddesses, as the greatest of the gods represented the Sun in all his glory. Juno reigns with Jupiter; she commands as a Queen; but her empire is that of beauty, and she omits nothing that can enhance its effect. Gold and precious stones, and the richest ornaments compose her apparel. Her long hair, braided by her own hands, flows on her shoulders. She covers her face with a veil of dazzling brightness, and her magnificent robe is the work of Minerva. To add still to the charms that embellish her, she borrows the cestus of Venus; that enchanting girdle, in which
love,

June.

CHAPTER love, and desire, and soft persuasion, are inter-
I. woven with marvellous art. Thus adorned,
 Juno quits Olympus, and after having hovered over the fertile Emathia, the mountains of Thrace, and the island of Lemnos, she reposes on Gargarus, the most elevated summit of Ida. The Lord of the Thunder perceives her, and his passion rekindles; a sudden flame shoots through all his senses; he breathes nothing but love, and quickly feels it in all its violence. In the transports of his soul he approaches the goddess, he presses her to his bosom, and a golden cloud conceals them from unhallowed eyes. The earth is instantly covered with thousands of flowers; the lotus, the hyacinth, and the crocus, gently lift their heads; a celestial vapour, purer and more resplendent than the light, is diffused through the air; and the enraptured deities, folded in each others arms, yield to the soft power of the God of Sleep*.

Diana.

THE Moon does not always possess the same splendour, and its disk assumes a different form as it approaches or recedes from the fountain of its light. When emerging from the darkness, it appears under the figure of a crescent: the

* Iliad. Book 14.

the symbol assigned to Diana shews the functions that were attributed to that goddess. As we have seen the Star of Night wander as it were through the plains of heaven, so the daughter of Latona courses over the fields. She flies the cities; preferring woods, and mountains, and inaccessible retreats, to the busy haunts of men. Her train is composed of the most beautiful sea-nymphs; she leads them to the cool Taygetus, bathed by the waters of Eurotas, or into the laughing vallies of Cynthus. Her formidable arrows are forged by the divine hands of the Cyclops in the caverns of Lipari: these are not only destined to reach the monsters of the forest, they are the ministers of her vengeance. "What evils await those whom she hath looked on in wrath! Their fields shall be laid waste; their flocks shall be cut off; they shall not see their children grow around them; or, if there should escape a son to be the comfort of their age, before they descend to the tomb they shall weep over his ashes. But thrice happy is the man whom Diana favours; he passes his days in peace, crowned with riches and honours. No storm affails him in a long life; a numerous family sits every day at his table; and

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CHAPTER “ and they bless together the beneficent deity
 I. “ that maintains among them abundance and
 “ peace *.”

THUS, great authority was ascribed to the Moon, and she was regarded as the proximate and immediate cause of every event. Enchantments, evocations, and all the prodigies of magic, were transacted by her light. The opinion of her influence over the human body has universally prevailed, and even subsists at this day, when all influences ought to be exploded except such as are founded on the laws of nature, and when true philosophy allows no action in the Moon except upon the tides.

Lucina,

AMONG the ancients this luminary was also a principle of generation ; “ but a passive and “ feminine principle, from which flows only “ the nutritive power that maintains the beings formed by the Sun †.” On this account the Moon presided over women in labour. In these circumstances they invoked her, and addressed her in these words : *Be propitious to us, O Lucina ! chaste Lucina, come to our aid !* and

* Imitation of Callimachus. Hymn 5.

† Freret, *Def. de la chronol.* p. 300.

and to render her favourable, they presented to her garlands of flowers.

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SUCH are the deities that represent the Sun and the Moon. The worship paid to those stars expresses their relation to the earth ; they made a principle part in a religion, the chief object of which was to paint and to personify the great phenomena of nature.

THE history of Mercury shews how far the empire of allegory extended. This god, the favourite companion of Jupiter and minister of his will, signified the Horizon, or that great circle of the sphere which marks the rising and setting of the stars. Justly then was he stiled *the messenger of the gods*, and the patron of heralds. He was represented sometimes by the head of a dog, because he seems placed in the heavens to perform the functions of that animal. His symbol was a Cock, as its morning song proclaims the approach of day. He also announces the time when light begins to give place to darkness. The nocturnal hemisphere was considered by the ancients as the abode of the dead, and therefore Mercury had the charge of conducting the shades to hell. Roads
and

Mercury

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and boundaries were dedicated to him as to the god that marks the transition from day to night, and who hath settled the limits between both worlds. Elevated to the rank of the celestial deities, he presided over one of the planets, and gave it his name; as Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, gave theirs to the planets consecrated to them.

The Pla-
nets.

THE Planets have a motion peculiar to themselves; on which account particular moving principles were assigned to them. If they had not a peculiar worship, they were put under the protection of the powerful deities that governed the world; and were in general designated by emblems characteristic of their number, their revolutions, and the regularity of their course. The seven columns erected in a temple of Laconia, the Cabiri, or the seven sons of Sydik adored in Samothracia, represented them, as did the seven pilots who governed that vessel which was placed in a luminous circle mentioned by Martian Capella *. They presided over the days of the week, a division of time established in their honour. The notes
of

* Gebelin, Alleg. orient. p. 66.

of music were also sacred to them. Among the ancients, the system of music was founded on astronomy: they compared the distances of the stars with the intervals of sound; and though such analogies cannot be explained without supposing the gravitation of matter previously known *, yet undoubtedly the connection between these two sciences was at that time understood.

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The Muses.

THE whole universe, such as they conceived it, was subject to the laws of Harmony. The starry firmament, the globe which we inhabit, and the seven planets, composed the nine great spheres of the universe. All perform their motions in concert, and in admirable order. The nine muses are the intelligences that move them, and who maintain the universal harmony.

* The force of gravitation toward the Sun being inversely as the square of the distance ; it follows, that a planet, at half the distance of another from the Sun, is acted upon by a quadruple gravity. A musical chord, double in length of another, must be stretched with a quadruple force, in order to make it sound the same note. And therefore, if we should suppose musical chords extended from the Sun to each of the planets, they would all sound the same note, if they were respectively stretched with forces sufficient to make the gravities of the planets equal.

Maclaurin.

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mony. Accordingly, they are always connected with the deities that represent the Sun. They are the daughters of Jupiter, and afford a sanctuary to Dionysus. Hercules glories in the title of Musagetes, or their Conductor. But they chiefly accompany the divine Apollo; and the rocks of Parnassus, which they have chosen for their abode, resound with their music. There they teach their favourites to understand the courses of the stars, and the motions of the heavens: they explain the causes that obscure the disk of the Moon, that disturb the bowels of the earth, that heave the restless bosom of the ocean, that sometimes prolong and sometimes abridge the empire of night. It was long the province of Poetry to celebrate these mysteries. The muses were then the deities of the poets; it was then that Phe-mius *, that Jopas †, and all those whom Atlas had instructed, sung the wonders of nature; and, seated at the tables of Kings, raised their voices to commemorate the adventures of the Gods.

Parce.

THE revolutions of the celestial spheres, or the times which they take to describe their orbits,

* Odyss. B. 1.

† Æneid. B. 1.

orbits, were fixed by Destiny ; a powerful deity, to whom all the rest were subordinate, and whose decrees it was impossible for them to gainsay or withstand ; for his decrees were nothing but the constant and immutable laws of nature. The *Parcæ*, who were the daughters of Destiny, executed his behests. *Lachesis* presided over the past ; *Clotho* over the present ; and *Atropos* over the future : and, by their vigilant attentions, the revolutions succeed one another without interruption. These goddesses were represented cloathed in white robes, their forehead was crowned with stars ; they were seated on resplendent thrones, where their voices accorded with the song of the *Syrens*. They held a spindle studded with diamonds, one end of which touched the earth, the other reached to heaven.

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FROM the doctrine of Destiny arose that of Fatality. After our actions had been subjected to the yoke of imperious necessity, when a frivolous science had sought for the reason of this in the stars, the *Parcæ* became the arbiters of life and of death to man, and their functions were confined to the spinning of the thread that determined his days.

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THERE remain still some other personages that belong to astronomy, such as the Gorgons; as we may infer from certain monuments, on which the head of Medusa is surrounded by the signs of the zodiac. In the number of these too are the Centaurs, Perseus, Andromeda, Orion, the Pleiades, and some others that are included in the constellations. The fables to which they have given rise may embellish the fictions of the poets, but they do not belong to our subject. Our intention is to make known the religion of the ancients, and our researches ought to be confined to those deities only whose worship made an essential part of that religion.

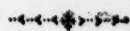
Recapitulation of the Gods of the second order.

THUS, the Gods of the second order represented, in some measure, the system of the world, Cybele, the same with Ops, was the earth; Uranus the heaven; and Saturn the image of time. The Sun took by turns the form of Dionysus, of Hercules, of Jupiter, of Pluto, of Neptune, of Apollo, of Esculapius, and of the God of Gardens. Io, Juno, Diana, and Lucina represented the Moon and its phases. The horizon was personified under the name of Mercury. Lastly, various emblems were employed

ployed to signify the planets ; and the Muses, as well as the Fates, were the spirits that presided over the harmony of the spheres and their revolutions.

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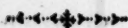


THESE Gods therefore had, for the subject of their government, the world and its laws. Those of the third order had a more decided connection with human beings. As they were destined to represent man alone, they exhibit the history of his toils. Weak and destitute at first, and forced to struggle with the elements, he seems to have been thrown on the surface of the earth merely to sink under the evils that assail him. But he soon becomes conscious of his power. The earth cultivated and embellished by his care, the establishment of societies, the monuments of art, the sublime discoveries in science, are the evidence of that creative genius with which he is endowed. Let us not be astonished that his labours have been deified. The same power that moves every particle of matter, displays itself with equal and even with greater energy in organized bodies. In Man, beyond all other animals, does the divine light blaze with greatest lustre ; and the breath by which he is animated was

Gods of the
third order.

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considered as an emanation from the great soul of the universe. Thus, every thing was connected in ancient theology, every thing had a relation to one universal principle, which, though produced under different forms, remained always essentially the same. Beings derived their force of activity from this principle, and acted only in subordination to its dictates. When, therefore, Man deified useful inventions, he considered himself as performing an act of gratitude and duty in ascribing them to this principle, by whose inspiration alone they had been obtained. Thus were the beings that are still to come under review, exalted into deities.

Inquiry into
to the first
ages of the
world.

THE history of a few years is sufficient to instruct us in that of the human mind. "Our world is young, says Lucretius, it is but just born; and therefore things are every day invented and brought to perfection. The arts have been but lately discovered. The philosophy that I am teaching is hardly known, and I am the first who have taught the Latin muses to speak its language." "If it is true, says the same poet in another place, that whatever we are acquainted with was formerly known, we must

must conclude, that former generations have been swept away by torrents; they must have become the prey of devouring fire; and empires must have been involved in the fall of the universe." Indeed the state of the world, that sort of infancy from which it seems just arisen, can be attributed to nothing but to revolutions which have produced a new order of things. Many circumstances prove that great changes have happened on the earth. Traditions of such changes are to be found in every nation; and the history of every people is in some sort connected with that of nature. But though even the memory of these events were annihilated, there are every where around us authentic monuments of such revolutions. The Naturalist finds them written in legible characters wherever he turns his eyes: and he perceives nothing around him but the wrecks of nature accumulated for ages. Chains of mountains, of which some are formed entirely of the spoils of marine animals; others produced by the successive accumulation of substances melted and calcined; vegetables buried at vast depths; immense masses of shells deposited on the summits of the highest hills; bodies that have visibly sustained the action of fire, sus-

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Changes
that have
happened
to the
Globe.

pendent between regular strata below the level of the sea ; lastly, that multiplicity of different substances hidden in the bowels of the earth, oblige the observer to acknowledge that it has undergone a variety of alterations ; that its surface has been changed, that it has had other seas and other climates, and that the present world rests upon the rubbish of worlds in ruin. Indeed we cannot doubt but that there have been times when great continents have disappeared ; when the races of men that inhabited them have perished ; and with them their labours, their glory, their industry, the very memory of their existence. Such have been those which preceded the ages of which we have received the history ; and it is from a revolution of this kind that the re-establishment of society at this day must be dated. To that fatal period must have succeeded times of calamity, during which the small number of those who had escaped the universal disaster would hardly be able to find a resting-place in the world. It would require a long series of years before vegetation could cover a burnt soil, or, that moist and miry earth could become firm. In this interval, Man, occupied entirely with the cares of self-preservation,

tion, would not easily preserve the traces of ancient ideas, or be capable of acquiring new. CHAPTER
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At last, when the earth was become susceptible of cultivation, when it was able to maintain numerous tribes, the consolatory arts would come to pour their beneficial influences around its inhabitants, who, placed under a less rigorous sky, would forget the evils to which they had so long been a prey.

WE shall not endeavour to describe the circumstances attendant on these happy changes. At our distance from such remote periods, devoid of every sort of monument, the conjectures we might form with regard to them would be vague and uncertain. Every thing that relates to the origin of society, presents insurmountable difficulties to the inquisitive researches of Man. History delineates to us with precision the rise and fall of most nations ; but the origin of some still continues involved in impenetrable obscurity. Such are, among others, the Assyrians, those first lords of Asia, and the inhabitants of Egypt. The formation of the monarchies that made these nations so celebrated, is lost in the darkness of antiquity. Their priests were in possession of records for thousands

CHAPTER thousands of years ; “ and though I should say
I. “ myriads, says Plato, it would not be a figure
 “ of speech *.” How shall we recover the
 events of so long a period from the oblivion in
 which they lye buried !

“ Why, says Lucretius †, have not the deeds
 “ anterior to the war of Thebes, and the
 “ ruin of Troy, been celebrated by the poets?
 “ Why have so many heroes, whose exploits
 “ are for ever excluded from the rolls of fame,
 “ been forgotten?” Is it because there were
 no poets to sing their praise? We know, how-
 ever, that these ancient people were in a flourish-
 ing state ; they cultivated the arts, and, perhaps,
 we ought to ascribe to them some of those
 discoveries that belong undoubtedly to the
 most distant ages. How many institutions do
 we not find, of which it is impossible to trace
 the commencement? The art of fusing metals,
 an art so difficult as to require many different
 processes, and much preliminary knowledge,
 has had an immemorial existence in the East.
 Letters too, are so ancient, that Pliny thought
 himself warranted to denominate them eternal.

The

* De legibus.

† Lib. 5.

The invention of the signs of the zodiac must, as we have already remarked, be of high antiquity: and what shall we say of the astronomy of the ancients, which they certainly did not invent; but which they often practised, without understanding its principles? Struck with these circumstances, Mr Bailly *, has concluded, that there existed a people anterior to any we are acquainted with, that were the inventors of Science; while those who have appeared after them on the stage of the world, have only inherited its fragments. The researches of this writer are exceedingly ingenious; but he has pushed the matter greatly too far. It is a pity he should have inveigled himself with this primitive nation; that he should have fixed its native place in the icy seas, in the environs of the pole; and that, in order to support a system which it was sufficient to have broached, he should have relied on the ideas of some philosophers who have been accused of allowing themselves to be seduced by their own imaginations. The great epochs of nature are unknown to us, and we are utterly unable to penetrate the obscurity by which they are concealed.

* Hist. de L'Astron. ancienne.

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cealed. Between the æra of the first discoveries and the period in which they seem to have been revived, it is certain that a vast interval has elapsed. Since it is impossible for us to fill this gap, let us rest satisfied with the facts that present themselves with incontestible evidence to our eyes. We shall never be able to penetrate beyond twenty centuries before our vulgar æra. It is then only that we begin to perceive a gleam of light; then arose that religion which collected the scattered portions of science, and united them into one body. If some have attempted to aggrandize the field of history, others have unreasonably endeavoured to narrow its bounds. The foundation of cities, the establishment of colonies, the wars, the intercourse of nations, the fall of empires, are events that may follow one another in rapid succession; but without insisting here on the operations of nature, in respect of which, time is nothing, and mocks all our calculations, the developement of the progress of the human mind requires a space at least equal to that which contains the history of human affairs.

The deluge.

MANY of our learned men have not been sufficiently attentive to this circumstance. They have

have attributed to the deluge the destruction of the world, and have fixed the precise date of that event, which is one of those that we must be content to take for granted. They, however, pretend to be well acquainted with all the circumstances attending it, and they have even undertaken to explain them. Among the causes that have produced it, one of the chief, in their opinion, is the inclination of the earth's axis, from which, they imagine, has proceeded the difference of seasons. Afterwards it was found necessary to collect together a quantity of water, sufficient to inundate the whole world : in order to accomplish this, some suppose that it contained in its bowels a vast reservoir, which they call an *Abyss*, the surface of which falling in, the waters gushed out. Another makes the earth encounter a comet in its course, which envelopes it in its atmosphere, and forms, by the watery particles in its train, *the windows of heaven*. They have in general pretended, that in the space of a few days, stones, marble, and the hardest rocks have suffered a total solution ; and that the petrifications found every where in immense quantities, are incontestible evidences of a deluge. Thus, accommodating themselves to the account of

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of Moses, where this event is related as a miracle, they have imagined systems that exhibit nothing but a monstrous conjunction of physics with theology.

The opinion of the Ancients with regard to the Deluge.

WE are not at liberty to doubt the testimony of the sacred writer ; but we must remember, that the traditions of the Jews relate only to an obscure nation confined to Palestine. Other people had not the benefit of the information communicated to them, and consequently entertained the darkest notions with regard to their true origin ; they admit at most a few particular inundations, inferred from the nature of the countries they inhabited. Indeed some of their authors talk of a universal deluge, and even, what is at first surprising, the description they have given of it is exactly similar to that in Scripture. According to Ovid, to Plutarch, and Lucian, the crimes of the human race had provoked the divine vengeance. God resolved to exterminate a perverse generation ; a single just person found favour in his sight. Deucalion, destined like Noah to re-people the earth, constructs an ark, enters it with his family and every living thing, and does not venture out till the dove returns to him with the olive.

olive-branch. To account for this singular conformity, it is sufficient to remark, that the authors we have just mentioned lived in ages long posterior to those of which we are speaking; that they wrote long after the foundation of the Alexandrian school, whither commerce had invited the Jews; and that then the intercourse of nations having established among them a constant communication, it is not surprising that they should have reciprocally borrowed the ideas of each other, which, though various and opposite in numerous particulars, had yet many things in common. The author of the *Metamorphoses* caught at those that most struck his imagination, in a poem which he intended should describe every occurrence; the submerſion of the whole world was in his eyes a much more important incident than that of a little Grecian province. There is also mention made of an ark in the poetical library of Apollodorus. If we have not spoken of Plato, it is, because the story of the Atlantis is of quite a different kind. We have only to reflect on the general design of the *Timæus* and of the *Critias*, to be convinced that what is there said of that celebrated island, on the story of which so many different systems have been fabricated,

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bricated, is nothing but a fiction, or philosophical romance. As to Plutarch, the profelytes to Christianity had begun to promulgate their doctrines in his time; and we know that these were widely diffused when Lucian composed his works, as he sometimes makes them the subject of his pleasantries. We will say nothing of Philo the Jew, of Eusebius, nor of some moderns who have anxiously endeavoured to discover a resemblance between the traditions of the Jews and those of other nations; as if truth stood in need of the support of fables. To have an idea of the force of their proofs, let us but attend to the explanation that some of them have given of a medal of Apamia, a city in Phrygia, on the reverse of which are a man and a woman in a sort of ark, with two birds, one of which holds the branch of a tree in its claws. Three letters, NOE, engraven on it, seemed to them the word Noah, and therefore they affirmed that the identity of Deucalion with that patriarch was established. Ottavio Falconieri published a dissertation on the subject, and Mr Bryant dwells with particular complacency on this medal. But he ought to have known that it was examined attentively in the last century by

by a very learned man *, who discovered that the letters, instead of NOE, were NEO, and formed the beginning of the word NEOCORON, another name for Apamea.

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IF we would understand perfectly what constituted the religion of the Ancients, we must go back to its true sources ; we will find that Sanchoniatho, Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod, and all those whose works are now the only authentic monuments that remain of that religion, have been silent as to the deluge ; and that their historians, such as Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, have not even mentioned that of Deucalion or of Ogyges. So far as it is possible to judge of their opinions, it would seem that they had in general a confused idea of some catastrophe that had formerly happened to the earth ; and without knowing precisely whether it had been owing to water or to fire, and even believing that the concurrence of these two elements had produced it, they contented themselves with representing it by images calculated to perpetuate the memory of universal devastation. Imagining that, to effect such re-

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volutions,

* Bianchini, *Historia universale*.

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The Giants.

volutions, there was a necessity for the action of extraordinary beings; they feigned those monsters the Children of the Earth, who were enemies of order and repose, who were endowed with prodigious strength, were capable of contending with Providence the principle of universal harmony, and who, venturing to lift their impious hands against the Gods, brought back the empire of Chaos. It is somewhat singular, that in all ages, and in all climates, the same emblems have been made use of to personify the principal phenomena of Nature. Every people on the earth have had their Giants, to whom they have attributed the same powers. This fable existed in Peru *, a country abounding in volcanoes, where Nature assumes a tremendous aspect; and it was not less known in Mexico †. We find it again in Japan ‡, in the island of Celebes or Macassar §, situated under the fire of the equator; among the Guanches, the ancient inhabitants of Teneriffe §, and, in general, in all countries where Man is surrounded with sublime and striking objects. We know the importance of the

* Hist. des voyages. Tom. 51.

† Ibid. Tom. 47.

‡ Kempfer, lib. 3. c. 1.

§ Hist. des voyages. Tom. 39.

§ Ibid. Tom. 6.

the Giants in the mythology of the Scandinavians *, and in the other extremity of the continent among the Arabians †, whose brilliant fictions are the source of that marvellous imagery now introduced into Europe. By this allegory the Ancients explained the destruction of the world and its consequences. It is impossible to mistake the sense of this fable, for the Gods which it opposes to the Giants are those of the second order; that is, the Sun, the Moon, and the other deities of that class; from which it would seem to have been the opinion of the inventors, that the war of the elements, and the dissolution of matter, could by no other images be more aptly described.

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It was the great Jupiter, the son of Saturn, whom the Giants attempted to dethrone. They seated themselves on the summit of Othrys, and besieged the palace of the immortals during nine years. At last the God summons, with a loud voice, the powers of heaven; he animates them by his courage, and opposes the

Their combats with the Gods.

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tremendous

* Introduction to the History of Denmark.

† History of English Poetry.

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tremendous Cyclops * to his audacious enemies. The signal is scarcely given, when a terrible noise is heard ; immense clouds of dust obscure the day. The Gods issue from their stations, and Olympus trembles under their feet. The Titans † advance to meet them ; their numerous cohorts spread horror and consternation. The conflict is begun, all heaven is convulsed with the shock ; the air resounds with tumultuous cries ; enormous rocks are hurled against the Gods, and fall back again with tremendous noise. For a long time the victory is doubtful, till at last Jupiter launches his thunder, and the lightnings set every thing on fire. The earth is in flames, the forests are burnt up ; the waters boil in the midst of the sea ; and the Titans are precipitated to Tartarus, the place of utter darkness. The conqueror was beginning to enjoy his victory, when

* They were called Βροντης, Στεροπτης, and Αεγυς ; which words signify Thunder, Lightning, Velocity.

† All the names of these Giants were significant. *Briareus*, expresses the loss of serenity ; *Othus*, the diversity of seasons ; *Ephialtes*, the great body of clouds ; *Enceladus*, the overflowing of great waters ; *Porphyreon*, the fracture of the earth ; *Mimas*, great rains ; and *Rachus*, the wind. Pluche, Hist. du ciel.

when he had to engage a new enemy, not less formidable. Jupiter had recourse to the same arms. After a violent struggle, in which Nature again was exposed to great convulsions, Typhon, or Typhæus *, the offspring of Terra and Tartarus, was buried under Etna, and his fall restored peace to the universe.

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I.

THESE descriptions, taken from one of the poets †, seem to indicate a general conflagration rather than a deluge. Such, at least, was the creed of the Egyptians. Hence, perhaps, they adopted the opinion which has been more than once revived, that the world would again perish by fire. “The day will come, cries the poet ‡, when the earth, the sea, and the “ethereal regions, shall become a prey to the “flames, by which the whole universe shall be “consumed.” These ideas of destruction made a part of the doctrine of the Stoics, who were rigid observers of virtue, and who encouraged the belief that guilt would be punished, and that God would alter the face of things. “Time, said they ||, will destroy and devour

Conflagra-
tion of the
world.

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“all

* *Typhon* or *Tipheus*, signifies the *smoke of fire, enflamed vapours*.

† Hesiod.

‡ Ovid.

|| Seneca.

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“ all things ; it will obliterate the memory not
 “ only of men, those frail and feeble beings,
 “ but of countries, of regions, and of all the
 “ parts that compose the universe. It will level
 “ mountains, it will change the course of ri-
 “ vers, it will swallow oceans, it will interrupt
 “ the intercourse betwixt nations, it will break
 “ the bands of society. Cities will be engulph-
 “ ed. Inundations, earthquakes, and destruc-
 “ tive fires will overwhelm the habitations of
 “ men. Every thing that breathes shall perish;
 “ and when the hour arrives in which the
 “ world shall be extinguished in order to its re-
 “ novation, Nature will sink under her own
 “ weight, the stars shall encounter one another,
 “ and, in the general wreck of matter, all
 “ created things will form one vast conflagra-
 “ tion. Then there will be no more distinc-
 “ tions among men ; then for ever shall disap-
 “ pear the names of the Caspian Sea, the Red
 “ Sea, the Gulph of Crete and of Ambracia,
 “ of Pontus, and of the Propontis. What then
 “ will become of the Adriatic, and of Scyl-
 “ la, and Charybdis, those famous gulphs of
 “ Sicily? All will be confounded. Neither
 “ walls nor towers will afford an asylum. In
 “ vain shall mortals make the penetralia of
 “ temples

“ temples resound with their supplications. A
“ single day shall witness the descent of all to the
“ grave. And those to whom Fortune has been
“ most liberal of her gifts, and whom she has
“ raised above their fellows; those who boast of
“ their descent and of their treasures, shall be
“ confounded in the general ruin *. But af-
“ ter this universal convulsion, after the extinc-
“ tion of the human race, and of the wild beasts
“ whose manners man shall have adopted, the
“ ancient order will be re-established; ani-
“ mals shall again be produced: there shall
“ be assigned to the earth a race born under
“ happier auspices, who, at first, shall be guilt-
“ less of any crime; but who, soon losing their
“ innocence, shall again provoke the Divine
“ vengeance by new crimes. So difficult to
“ be pursued is the road of Virtue! †”

THE flourishing state of the stoic philoso-
phy in the first ages of our æra is well known.
It was the last resort of virtue, while the Ro-
man empire groaned under the cruellest rod of
despotism; and never did that empire shew it-
self more sublime, or astonish the world by

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greater

* Seneca.

† Id.

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greater or more exalted characters, than at that period. This philosophy had necessarily a decided influence on morals, and still more on opinions; and we ought not to be surprised that its doctrines were mingled with those of Christianity, which then began to be diffused. Among the different sects into which the new religion, almost in the moment of its birth, was divided, there were some who adopted this ancient tradition of the end of the world, and who even maintained that it was at hand. The doctrine of the Millenarians had many partisans. But although their predictions have never been fulfilled, there are every day some fanatics to be met with, who speak the same language. It was foretold that a deluge would happen in the year 1524. In 1706, Whiston, an excellent astronomer and acute observer, discovered in the Apocalypse that Jesus Christ would appear upon the earth in the year 1715, or 1716 at the latest; that he would then reign 1000 years, and that the consummation of all things would take place at the conclusion of that term. Burnet, an author, like the preceding, of a Theory of the Earth, when speaking of the conflagration of the globe, has only followed an opinion pretty generally received, and

and which is founded on the testimony of the Fathers and Apostles themselves. He has, however, expressed himself poetically, and his imagination does not yield to that of the Ancients, as we may judge by the following passage :

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“ Let us reflect on the vanity and transient  
 “ glory of all this habitable world ; how, by the  
 “ force of one element breaking loose upon  
 “ the rest, all the varieties of nature, all the  
 “ works of art, all the labours of men, are re-  
 “ duced to nothing ; all that we admired and  
 “ adored before, as great and magnificent, is  
 “ obliterated or vanished ; and another form and  
 “ face of things, plain, simple, and every where  
 “ the same, overspreads the whole earth. Where  
 “ are now the great empires of the world, and  
 “ their great imperial cities ? their pillars,  
 “ trophies, and monuments of glory ? Shew  
 “ me where they stood ; read the inscription ;  
 “ tell me the victor's name. What remains,  
 “ what impressions, what difference or distinc-  
 “ tion do you see in this mass of fire ? *Rome*  
 “ itself, *eternal Rome*, the great city, the Em-  
 “ press of the world, whose domination and  
 “ superstition, *ancient and modern*, make a great  
 “ part of the history of this earth ; what is be-  
 come



## CHAPTER

## I.



“ come of her now? She laid her foundations  
 “ deep, and her palaces were strong and sumptuous : *she glorified herself, and lived deliciously ; and said in her heart, I sit a Queen, and shall see no sorrow.* But her hour is come,  
 “ she is wiped away from the face of the earth,  
 “ and buried in perpetual oblivion. But it is  
 “ not cities only, and works of mens hands ;  
 “ but the everlasting hills, the mountains and  
 “ rocks of the earth, are melted as wax before  
 “ the sun ; and *their place is no where found.*  
 “ Here stood the *Alps*, a prodigious range of  
 “ stone, the load of the earth, that covered many  
 “ countries, and reached their arms from the  
 “ *Ocean* to the *Black Sea* ; this huge mass of  
 “ stone is softened and dissolved, as a tender  
 “ cloud into rain. Here stood the *African*  
 “ mountains, and *Atlas* with his top above the  
 “ clouds. There was frozen *Caucasus*, and  
 “ *Taurus*, and *Imaus*, and the mountains of  
 “ *Asia* : And yonder, towards the north, stood  
 “ the *Riphaean* hills, clothed in ice and snow.  
 “ All these are vanished, dropped away as the  
 “ snow upon their heads, and swallowed up in  
 “ a red sea of fire \*.”

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\* Theory, Ed. 1759. Vol. 2. p. 149.

IN this manner have the opinions of the Ancients been transmitted to our times : we have related those of the Moderns, only to shew whence they have been derived, and that it is possible to refer all religions to one common origin, by divesting them of the local and foreign circumstances which characterize each in particular. The religion of which we are now writing the history, presents us with scenes of uncommon magnificence. It comprehends all times, and those that do not now exist even in tradition. After having exhibited Man unhappy, and groaning under the effects of Divine Vengeance ; it again represents him to us, restored to himself, and enjoying the tranquillity of Nature.

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AT this time it shews us the daring Genius who, mounting to heaven, robbed the immortal gods of their sacred fire, and brought it to the earth. The first that saw it, admiring its brilliance, would have kissed and embraced it. " Satyr, cries Prometheus, you will lament the loss of your beard. It burns when it is touched, but it gives light and heat to those who know how to use it \*." It is not difficult

Prometheus  
us.

to

\* Plutarch.

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to discover the sense of this fable. Prometheus signifies *human reason*, and therefore he is said to have invented the arts and the sciences. But how fatal were the consequences of the present he made to the human race! Jupiter enraged, addresses him in these threatening words: "O son of Japetus, the most audacious  
 " of mortals, you boast of having deceived  
 " me, but you and your posterity shall be pu-  
 " nished. Let them enjoy the fire; but I will  
 " send evil among them, and it they shall che-  
 " rish \*."

## Pandora.

HE spoke, and by his order the industrious Vulcan takes a bit of clay, and having moistened it with water, he moulds it into the figure of a young woman of exquisite beauty. The other Gods are eager to outdo one another in endowing this master-piece with every charm. Minerva gives her wisdom; Venus, the alluring graces; and the Goddess of Persuasion animates her eyes. Soon she becomes a mistress in the art of pleasing; she composes her dress of the richest ornaments; the Hours crown her with a garland of vernal flowers; but the cruel  
 murderer

\* Hesiod.



I.

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ALMOST all nations have had recourse to Tantalus allegory in their accounts of moral evil. Besides the fable of Pandora, the Greeks had that of Tantalus. His history has been disfigured by mythologists, when they have repeated that this prince served up to the inhabitants of Olympus his own son Pelops at a feast. "It is absurd, says Pindar, to accuse the gods of injustice or cruelty. If there ever was a mortal on whom they lavished their favours, it was Tantalus; but he knew not the art of being happy. His pride destroyed him.

" Having

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“ Having stolen nectar and ambrosia, substances
 “ that confer immortality, and having impart-
 “ ed them to his guests, he was condemned
 “ to a terrible punishment, and thrown into
 “ hell. Let no one hope to conceal his actions
 “ from the sight of heaven. The crime of the
 “ father was fatal also to the son. The gods
 “ sent back Pelops to the earth, and subjected
 “ his existence to the short period of human
 “ life.” We may remark a great analogy be-
 tween Tantalus and Prometheus. The one
 sees incessantly over his head a huge rock
 ready to fall, without being able to escape it.
 The other is chained to the summit of Cauca-
 sus, and an insatiable vulture gnaws his liver,
 that is continually renewed. Both of them
 suffer the punishment due to their temerity;
 and they are the cause of all the evils that have
 happened on the earth.

The four
 ages.

Now disappear the times of innocence. To
 the age of gold succeed the ages of silver, of
 brass, and of iron. These four ages, which
 evidently indicate different degrees of civi-
 lization, are at the same time an emblem of
 the progress of the arts. If we divest this alle-
 gory of all foreign ornament, of those agree-
 able

able descriptions to which it has given rise, we shall not be at a loss to discover its origin. Gold and silver, which are met with almost at the surface of the earth, are of all metals the most easily wrought, and therefore they have been the earliest known. Brass comes next, and accordingly the weapons of war were long made of brass, as well as the other implements that were anciently in use. It long continued to be exclusively employed in sacrifices; because ancient customs, especially those connected with religion, are always preserved with scrupulous anxiety and care. At last the superior utility of iron was discovered; the Ancients learnt to fuse and to work it; and as the manufacture of this metal requires the most difficult processes, it necessarily supposes a people living in society; from that moment men lost the simplicity of their manners, and Astræa, it was said, abandoned a world deluged in blood. It is probable, therefore, that the four ages, so much celebrated by the poets, received their denomination from the successive discovery of these four principal metals.

THIS discovery was attributed to supernatural beings that were considered as a sort of Genii,

CHAPTER

I.

Cyclops.

Cyclops.

Telchines.

Curetes.

Corybantes.

Dactyli.

Cabiri.

Genii, or inferior deities. Such were the Cyclops, who inhabited the caverns of Lipari. From the top of the black and rugged rocks with which that island is covered, issued clouds of smoke, and the reiterated strokes of the hammer were heard to resound upon the anvil. In this number also were the Telchines, who had learnt to work in iron; the Curetes and Corybantes, not less perfect in metallurgy; the Dactyli, who added to this art that of medicine, and who possessed the secret of charming pain by enchantments, or by salutary remedies: lastly, the most celebrated of all were the Cabiri, who had afterwards a worship peculiarly addressed to them, in the islands of Lemnos and Samothracia, and who presided over the planets, after the emblems that represent the metals had been applied to them. These different personages were at the same time said to be the first who instituted sacred ceremonies; which proves, that in Greece the arts and religion were coeval. Indeed the worship of the Gods was established as soon as men began to be civilized; but especially after the introduction of the use of iron.

Beres;

BEFORE that time, men fed on acorns, and had

had no other subsistence but what the earth spontaneously produced by the genial influence of the sun and the showers. Ceres is the beneficent deity that changed their gross food. She had chosen for her residence the fertile plains in the centre of Sicily. There, collecting the scattered tribes, she taught them the art of ploughing the earth, to make it fertile; and of drawing their nourishment from its bosom. But that island which she so much favoured soon became for her a scene of distress. One day, as her daughter Proserpine was gathering flowers in the smiling vallies of Enna, the fable deity of hell perceived her. Passion instantly inflames him, he seizes her in the midst of her companions, seats her beside him in his chariot, gives the lash to his coursers, and opening a road into Tartarus, immures his conquest from every eye. Ceres sought her daughter long, and long she wearied Heaven with her cries. Provided with two torches kindled at the flames of Etna, she traversed every climate, from the gates of the East to the extremities of the West. Three times she crossed the silver bed of the river Achelous, three times she rested on the brink of the wells

CHAPTER

I.

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Proserpina.

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of

## CHAPTER

## I.

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of Calliochorus \* ; nor did she learn, till after many a painful journey, the lot of her daughter. The unhappy mother implored the assistance of Jupiter ; and it was granted to her prayers, that Proserpine should be restored to the world if she had eaten nothing since her rape ; but, unfortunately, she had tasted the seeds of a pomegranate as she was walking in the Elysiac fields. The Destinies then decreed, that she should pass six months in hell, and that for the rest of the year she should enjoy the light of the sun.

THIS history alludes to the operations of agriculture. Proserpine ravished by Pluto, means the corn which remains concealed during Winter, that it may spring forth when the deity of darkness has yielded to the Summer sun. Sicily is the place of her birth, a country remarkable for its universal fertility, and in which wheat grew spontaneously. Other nations soon learnt the use of grain. Triptolemus, instructed by the goddess herself, taught them the art of guiding the plough, of sowing the fields, and of reaping rich harvests.

“ THE

\* Callimachus. Hymn 3.



"THE culture of the ground, says Rousseau, "is necessarily followed by its partition; as "property, once acknowledged, is succeeded "by the first rules of justice." Thus it is said that Ceres first invented land-marks, first instituted laws. The Athenians preserved with veneration those which she herself had dictated. Of these simple laws, which consist of three only, the first enjoined piety to parents, the second, homage to the Gods, and a sacrifice of the fruits of the Earth; and the third prohibited injury to animals. These afterwards served as a model to succeeding legislators, and the code of the celebrated Draco was but a commentary on the primitive laws of Ceres \*.

CHAPTER

I.

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WHILE agriculture flourished under the care of this goddess, Bacchus planted the vine; and the task which he accomplished of softening the manners of a savage people, is signified by the lions and the tygers that he tamed. As a consequence of the disorder which the various traditions of the poets introduced into mythology, this god has been often confounded with one of those who represented the sun.

Bacchus.

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That

* Academie de Belles Lettres. Tom. 39. Mem. p. 206.

CHAPTER I. That luminary, it is true, may be regarded as the father of agriculture, as the fruits owe their maturity to his heat alone. But we have already shewn, that Dionysus was the genius of the sun, considered in its annual progress; and the explication of the signs that characterise him, is an evident proof that he is distinct from Bacchus. The adventures of this latter have a reference to the vintage. It was said that he was torn in pieces, to denote the manner of making wine. The grapes he is crowned with, the noisy mirth that accompanies him, the songs of triumph, and the transports of his worshippers, present an image of the country when he comes to enrich it with his bounty. The old Silenus follows in his train, scarcely supported by his staggering limbs; the same Silenus who was reckoned in the number of the wise men, and who awakened from his intoxication to chant in sublime strains the formation of the world. Shouts of joy announce the arrival of the God. When he appears, the labourer forgets his toil, and, softly reclined on the grass, makes large libations to his honour.

How happy would man have been if he had
remained

remained content with these simple pleasures, without being ambitious of other enjoyments!

But in vain does Nature lavish her blessings ; in vain do the fields and the vines produce abundant nourishment ; animals are slaughtered, and their blood mingled with the delicious fruits of Ceres and of Bacchus. “ Barbarous men ! cries Pythagoras, cease the horrid repast. Already loaded with viands, and surfeited with abundance, what madness urges you to such unnecessary cruelty ? Why do you accuse our common mother, Earth, of being incapable of affording you subsistence ? Why do you rebel against Ceres, the inventress of sacred laws ? How can you have the heart to eat with the milk, the blood of the very cattle that yield it ? The panther and the lion, which you name ravenous beasts, follow of necessity their natural instinct, and devour other animals to preserve their own life : but you, an hundred times more wild and ravenous than they, counteract, without necessity, your natural instinct, for the sake of indulging a barbarous appetite. The animals which you devour are not those that feed on others ; you do not eat carnivorous animals, but you imitate their savage

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I.



“ nature. You hunger only after the meek
 “ and innocent of the brute creation ; crea-
 “ tures that are harmless, that fondly attach
 “ themselves to your persons, and which you
 “ devour as the reward of their faithful ser-
 “ vices *.”

It was thus that Pythagoras, the most ancient of the Grecian sages, endeavoured to bring back his countrymen to the simple laws of nature. His disciples imitated his example. That they might arrive at the perfection of their being, one of the principal injunctions recommended by their doctrine was abstinence from the flesh of animals. They instituted several religious associations ; the name of Bacic, which was given to one of them, shews that they meant to adopt the practices, and to revive the institutions that were observed when agriculture was introduced.

Hermes.

THIS art, so anciently practised, supposes the previous discovery of others ; and it even stands in need of their assistance. The use of speech must have preceded the establishment and distinction of families. The division of ground gave birth

* Plutarch.

to Geometry. The necessity of studying the stars, and of understanding the course of the seasons, soon became evident. At last, when men were secure of subsistence, the fine arts appeared to occupy their hours of leisure. They did homage, for all these discoveries, to the Supreme Being, by worshipping him under the name of *Hermes*. This god presided at once over Grammar, Astronomy, Eloquence and Music; and the different attributes that distinguish him, shew that he was considered as the inventor of these sciences. He bestowed on all things their proper name, and found out the use of letters. Not only did he substitute, instead of the inarticulate accents which composed the language of ancient people, measured sounds subjected to rules, but he also discovered the art of painting as it were, and of substantiating the thoughts. The caduceus which he carried in his hand indicated his acquaintance with astronomy. The rod represented the Equator, and the two serpents the oblique progress of the sun in the Ecliptic. It appears that, among the Egyptians, the year originally consisted but of 360 days, because they attributed the addition of the epact, or five intercalary days, to this god. The 36525 rolls that were to be seen near his statue,

CHAPTER are evidently the expression in decimals of the
 I. year composed of 365 days and a fourth, or of
 365.25. This number has appeared mysterious
 to several learned men. According to Freret *,
 it signified the revolution of the equinoxes ; but,
 in order to admit that signification, we must
 suppose the observations of the Ancients to have
 been very imperfect, which cannot be allowed.
 M. Gebelin †, by decomposing it, and investiga-
 ting its divisors, discovered many periods of
 time, which, multiplied by one another, formed
 a particular cycle. We are indebted to M.
 Dupuis for the simple and natural explanation
 which we have adopted. Hermes invented the
 lyre with three strings. He was also the god of
 Eloquence, and he had principally contributed
 to rescue men from a state of barbarity. Last-
 ly, the science which goes by his name ‡, was
 of his invention ; its object is to penetrate into
 the formation of bodies ; it has often detected
 Nature in her operations, and can alone reveal
 to us her secrets. He left a number of consi-
 derable works, or rather, every useful thing was
 attributed to him : wise men, operating in re-
 tirement

* *Defense de la Chronologie.*

† *Allegories Orientales.*

‡ *The Hermetic Philosophy, or Chemistry.*

sement within their temples, and devoting themselves to the information of their compatriots; ascribed to him the honours due to their own genius. For a long time columns were the only archives, and the name of *Thot*, given them by the Egyptians, was the same with that of *Hermes*: hence the tradition that this god engraved his discoveries on stone, that they might be transmitted to posterity. These were the precious monuments that afforded materials to Sanchoniatho, while he composed his history of the Origin of the World,

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I.

THUS we have taken a view of ancient times, and followed the progress of civilization, from the infancy of society to the moment of its perfection. The Giants, first of all, have shewn us the destruction and renovation of the world. Then we discover, in the fable of Prometheus, the first evolution of human reason. Evil is introduced by Pandora, and the crime of Tantalus is punished in his most distant posterity. This period is also that of the establishment of the arts. Particular deities, known under the names of Cyclops, Telchines, Curetes, Corybantes, Dactyli, and Cabiri, devote themselves to the occupations of metallurgy. Ceres teaches

Recapitulation of the Gods of the third order.

CHAPTER teaches agriculture, and dictates laws. The rape
I. of her daughter Proserpine is emblematic of the
 operations of husbandry. Bacchus plants the
 grape, and teaches the art of making wine.
 Lastly, Hermes, and his attributes, characterize
 the inventive genius, and multiplied discoveries
 of Man.

SUCH were the principal divinities that constituted the religion of the Ancients. Each had peculiar functions, and they were divided into three great orders : one of these represented the Supreme Being and his various attributes, together with matter and its different forms : the second, the system of the world : and the last, the objects that relate to Man. Thus their history included that of universal nature.

Demons. THE gods who composed the celestial hierarchy were, as we have already observed, so many intelligences distinct from one another, though all proceeding from the same principle. They had under them ministers of their will called *Demons*, who were entrusted with the execution of their orders. These particular genii formed, in some measure, a gradation in the chain

chain of beings. They were scattered over the universe, and filled the space that separates man from the Deity. Of these there were several sorts; one good and beneficent, others incessantly occupied with laying snares for the worthy, and leading them aside from the road of Virtue. These singular ideas, which may help to reconcile the existence of evil with the freedom of the human will, have been adopted among all nations. They received their origin in the East, where they were connected with the religious system. Pythagoras, and Thales of Miletus were the first, it is said, who brought them into Greece. Plato made them the basis of that ideal philosophy which consisted in abstract ideas, and which, by raising itself above matter and sense, created an intellectual world. The revolution caused by the appearance of Christianity, far from destroying these opinions, tended to confirm them. Many of the fathers of the church were Platonists*; and those among them who were most zealous in their enmity to the ancient religion, took advantage of its metaphysical opinions; perhaps from a dread of startling unsettled minds, or rather because,

by

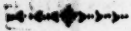
CHAPTER,

I.

* Gibbon.

CHAPTER

I.



by the particular permission of God, the philosophers had been inspired with the knowledge of truths the most sublime, that they might prepare the way for the Gospel. Many instances of this might be brought, but we confine ourselves to that which concerns the Demons. If we believe Vandalius, and especially Bekker, who has most thoroughly investigated the subject, it would seem that this doctrine is one of those that we have borrowed from the Ancients.

THERE were still other deities, who may be termed *local*; because they made no part of the universal worship, but were confined to a particular district. Thus, Republics had tutelar genii, who watched over their preservation, and with regard to whom a religious silence was observed, lest their enemies might endeavour to propitiate them. They were anxious too to conceal the secret name of their cities *: it was a crime to pronounce it; and Valerius Soranus was severely punished for having revealed that of Rome †. On the other hand, the citizens

Penates.

* Macrobius.

† This name was Valentia. See *Monde Primitif*, tom. 8. p. 299.

citizens put themselves and their families under the protection of some god, whom they chose at pleasure. The images made use of to represent them were the Lares and Penates. Within each house there was a place appropriated for their reception called the *Focus*, because a perpetual fire was kept up there. This sacred place was also an inviolable asylum. Coriolanus was secure in the house of his enemy the moment he embraced the household-gods *.

CHAPTER

I



WE have still to take notice of several personages, improperly called Gods, who cannot be ranked with those we have already enumerated. In a religion which, though it acknowledged one first cause, admitted the existence of many inferior powers, it was difficult to confine the objects of worship within bounds. The imagination, carried along by a crowd of seducing images, soon began to increase the number. It peopled the country with beings of every kind. The woods were filled with Satyrs and Fauns, while every tree had its Dryad.

Particular
Deities

“THE

* Plutarch.

CHAPTER

I.

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“ THE Nymphs, says Callimachus, are born
 “ with the Oaks. They rejoice when the dew
 “ re-animates these trees, and they weep at the
 “ fall of their leaves.” A god resided at the
 source of every river, and his voice was heard
 in its gentle murmurs. Old Ocean himself
 had his palace in moist grottos, where the
 daughters of Nereus composed his court. Every
 object around bore the stamp of the marvelous.
 “ That rock against which the waves
 “ are dashing, still preserves the figure of the
 “ unhappy Lychas. The Hyacinth records
 “ the fatal death of the friend of Apollo. Far-
 “ ther is heard the solitary Echo complaining
 “ of Narcissus.” The Poets sung the history
 of these metamorphoses, and their ingenious
 fictions contributed to maintain the illusion.
 Even moral beings had a sensible existence at-
 tributed to them. Psyche was the Soul *, and
 from her union with Love sprung Pleasure.
 The Graces holding each other by the hand;
 Fame, that monster with innumerable eyes,
 mouths, and ears, who, touching the earth
 with her feet, hides her head in the clouds;
 the Attributes ascribed to Fortune; those by
 which

* Warburton's Divine legation, Vol. I.

which wisdom, courage, and strength were designed, shew to what a height the rage for Allegory was carried. But they were not content with having animated the Virtues, even Vices were personified. Hunger, Hatred, Discord, and Revenge had their altars; and the brave Spartans themselves sacrificed to Fear.

CHAPTER

I.



WHY are we not permitted to pass over in silence those opprobrious times that deserve to be expunged from the records of history, when vile tyrants, who during life had been the disgrace of humanity, received divine honours after death? when a people, lately free, bold, and full of energy, prostrated themselves in trembling crowds before the statues of an Octavius, and of a Tiberius? These deifications were hardly known in the days of liberty, and never were they so frequent, as when despotism, binding in fetters the faculties of the soul, left men no sentiment but fear. Such profanation was the work of slavery. That this Religion did not disdain to lend her aid to the delusion, was owing to the natural tolerance of her genius; which, so long as the public worship alone was concerned, accounted external forms of no importance.

Apotheosis

BUT

CHAPTER

I.



BUT while slaves thus abused her sacred name, while she seemed in some sort abandoned to the caprice of the Poets, who disfigured while they thought they embellished her; to that of the philosophers themselves, who endeavoured to bend her to their systems; she inclosed in her bosom an institution which had for its principal object, to preserve her simple doctrines inviolate, and to bring back her worship to its primitive dignity. Such was the end proposed by the Mysteries.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

Of the Secret Worship, or of the Mysteries.

Difficulties
of an inquiry
into the
Mysteries

THIS interesting part of the Ancient Religion, which in reality constitutes its essence, is at the same time that part of it which is of the most difficult investigation. Hitherto traditions, which are indeed at best uncertain and often contradictory, have been our guides in endeavouring to unravel the chaos of mythology; but here all is covered with thick darkness; it is now necessary, as it were, to descend into the bowels of the earth; to publish what for a long time it was not permitted to reveal; to scrutinize a secret kept religiously for ages, and on which it was hardly allowed to form a conjecture. The Ancients, bound by the most sacred of all oaths, explained themselves on this head with the greatest reserve, as often as they had occasion to speak of the Mysteries. It must be allowed, however, that there were extant a great many works concerning these ceremonies: besides the books that treated of them professedly, and which being published

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under

CHAPTER

II.

us id est

Authors
who have
treated of
them.

under the names of Orpheus, of Musæus, or of Eumolpus, may be termed *ritual books*; it is certain, that Stesimbrotus, Menander, Hecætes, Arignotus the Pythagorean, and several others, undertook to describe them: but now when the works of these authors are lost, the only monuments existing are some fragments that contain a few allusions, of which it is very difficult to find the application; and we are forced to have recourse to the testimony even of those that have an interest in deceiving.

THE first apologists of Christianity have thrown some light on this obscure subject. It was necessary for them to discover the dogmas that they meant to refute; and though they have in general disfigured them, their vehement declamations contain a multitude of interesting particulars. The writings of Arnobius, of Tertullian, but especially of Clements Alexandrinus, are still the principal sources from which the moderns derive their information. These, in their turn, have been influenced by particular views. Some of them, as may naturally be imagined, have not scrupled to adopt the invectives that had formerly been dictated by blind zeal against the institutions

done of antiquity: and if there are any who have shewn themselves superior to such unjust prejudices, they have not always been able to guard against the spirit of system. In this respect, Warburton deserves our censure *. His inquiries are extremely ingenious; but he has maintained that the Gods were only deified heroes. M. Gebelin †, who wished to find in every circumstance some reference to agriculture, perceived nothing in these Mysteries but an emblem of the origin and progress of that art; while, according to the author of *Antiquity Unveiled* ‡, “they ought to be considered as the fatal deposit of the religious melancholy of the first men.” Although the nature of this work does not permit us to enter into all the details which a matter of such importance would require, yet as we are to go over the same ground, we shall take advantage of the discoveries, and the great labours of those who have preceded us. Perhaps, by following their footsteps we shall succeed in forming a more exact idea of a Religion too long misunderstood, and too often ig-

I 2

norantly

* Divine Legation of Moses.

† Hist. du Calendrier.

‡ L'Antiquité Devoilée. Liv. 3. C. 2.

CHAPTER
II.

norantly insulted. But let us enter the sacred recesses of her temple. There, truly august, we shall behold her shining with unborrowed lustre, joining to the pomp of ceremonious observance the practice of the austere virtues, and intitled by her morality to command the minds of enlightened nations.

Difference
of the two
kinds of
worship.

Public
worship.

WE have already distinguished two kinds of worship in the ancient religion. The first, called Popular, consisted chiefly in outward forms. "It presented to its votaries, says Fret, a wide but fertile field, which every one was at liberty to appropriate, and where each roamed at pleasure without subordination, and without the mutual co-operation or consent that produce uniformity." The history of those gods that have just come under our review has furnished us with more than one example of this; and often, in spite of all our endeavours, it has been difficult for us to discover the primitive idea of which they were originally the image. This is not the case with the other species of worship: in it all is connected and concatenated; it rests on a sacred basis; it presents a system all the parts of which correspond with each other; and,

Secret wor-
ship.

G

and, far from permitting any capricious innovation, it firmly withstood every attack on the most unessential points of its doctrines. The preparations it exacted contributed to maintain its purity. It was enveloped in respect and silence as with an impenetrable veil. Thus, while the people in crowds frequented the porticoes of the temple, and, prostrate before the altars of Jupiter, adored that powerful deity whom they had been taught to revere, but whose essence was unknown to them, a small number only were admitted into the sanctuary: these enjoyed the actual presence of the god; they arose by degrees to comprehend the principles of things; and, contemplating the spectacle of the universe, subject to invariable laws, they did homage to him who is the origin of all.

THE second worship differed not essentially from the first, of which indeed it was symbolical, but it had a more direct tendency. While it attracted regard by the commanding magnificence of its exterior, it was still more respectable by its doctrines. The initiated, that is, such as had undergone certain preparatory trials, alone were permitted to celebrate this

This last
was known
by the
name of
Mysteries.

CHAPTER
II.

Plan of the
Treatise on
the Myste-
ries.

Universali-
ty of the
Mysteries.

worship. It was designed by a name expressive of its nature. *The Mysteries*, or the concealed part of the ancient Religion, contained its most august and most sacred doctrines.

WE shall begin with investigating the origin of those Mysteries, and their object. Afterwards, as we describe the ceremonies with which they were accompanied, we shall chiefly endeavour to unfold their spirit; and having shewn their importance, and demonstrated what were the opinions with respect to them among the Ancients, we shall, in a few words, attend to the revolutions which an institution, so celebrated and so universally adopted, was in the end exposed to.

INDEED, this institution was by no means peculiar to the Greeks, but existed among all the nations of the earth. Religion, in every country, concealed herself under a veil: in the general opinion she descended from heaven, where she had received divine illumination, and therefore perhaps she thought it necessary to accommodate herself to the weakness of our organs, by concealing a part of her splendour; or perhaps, by promulgating incomprehensible dogmas,

was, she meant to avoid the inquisitive research of idle curiosity. For the most part, instead of persuasion, she made use of authority, and led captive the senses, that she might the more easily bring reason under subjection. Hence, sometimes prodigies and marvellous events succeeded one another with rapidity, while injunctions of the most rigorous silence were imposed on the spectators. Hence those objects of magnificence or terror presented to the eyes, all calculated to produce the most lively impressions on the mind. Such ceremonies are still in use in China, in Japan, and in those Eastern monarchies that have subsisted from immemorial times *. They were known to the Caribbees, to the Mexicans, and to the inhabitants of Peru †, before the destructive invasion of the Spaniards; and they are found also at this day among the savages scattered over the Northern countries of the New World ‡, who, with their independence, have preserved their original laws. Such formerly were the opinions of our brave ancestors, who supported for so long a time the

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cause

* Lafiteau, Mœurs des sauvages. Tom. 2.

† Id. ibid.

‡ Id. ibid.

CHAPTER
II.

cause of liberty, against the oppressors of the human race: they too had a secret religion, and they fixed its abode in the obscurest retreats. Darksome woods that inspired a sacred horror, and which time had respected as well as the hand of man, were the habitations of their gods. Nobody durst approach them except on those stated days in which the Druids, escorted by the principal chiefs, went in pompous solemnity to cut the sacred mistletoe, the symbol of their worship. In the Northern extremity of our continent also, inaccessible grottos and immense caverns served to conceal from the multitude the sacrifices * of the priests of Odin, as we learn from some ancient characters inscribed on certain rocks in Iceland or Norway. Lastly, even those people that have been lately discovered scattered among the islands of the great Pacific Ocean, and who have been separated till now from the world, have also their Mysteries†. We have had more than one occasion to observe this conformity of religious opinions in different ages and in different climates: whence, perhaps, it may be concluded, that between man and

* Introduction to the History of Denmark.

† Cook's Voyages.

and the Deity, there exist only a certain number of connecting relations, which are easily traced. Thus, each individual system originating from the same principles, would produce nearly similar results when civil society began to be formed; and when afterwards a general intercourse was established among nations, it is not surprising that various people should insensibly adopt a theology similar in the essential parts, though different in the form.

CHAPTER

II.

THUS, the first Greeks easily embraced that theology which was introduced among them by the colonies. They had borrowed their deities from the Oriental nations: to them they were indebted for that secret part of the religion which could alone inform them of the true object of their veneration. The Mysteries were particularly celebrated in that country which has justly been considered as the parent of the sciences*: there they were cultivated by an order of priests entrusted with the care of preserving the sacred deposit; and there it was only allowed to a few wise men to remove the veil by which they were concealed. Orpheus, to whom we must always have recourse when

Their origin among the Greeks.

we

* Egypt.

CHAPTER II. we investigate the Religion of the Greeks, had travelled into Egypt; whence he had brought the Mysteries, which a philosopher of antiquity * calls Divine; because they softened the manners of men; because, with laws, they bestowed on them life and nourishment; and, divesting them of their brutal inclinations, recalled them to the virtues of humanity.

THEY were first instituted in a small island situated at the entry of the Thracian Chersonesus, which antiquity long venerated as the centre of religion, and thence they passed insensibly into the neighbouring countries. Melampus, instructed in the school of Orpheus, established similar institutions in Argolis, as did Trophonius in Boeotia, and the celebrated Musæus at Athens †. In each canton they were distinguished by a different name, or rather, if we may use the expression, they had been put under the invocation of a particular divinity, chosen most commonly out of those of the third order: a certain proof, that in Greece they had the same origin with the arts. Thus, the most ancient of all were those of the

* Cicero, de Legibus.

† Tertul. Apolog.

the discoverers of metallurgy, of the Cyclops at Lemnos, of the Curetes and Dactyli in the island of Crete; but especially of the Cabiri in Samothracia: which shews us, at the same time, that civilization began in the islands that surround Greece, whence it was afterwards spread over the continent. When by a lucky revolution the Greeks had been rescued from barbarism, they wished that the beneficent deities, to whom they attributed the discoveries that were most useful to man, should preside over the religious worship which had been introduced at the same period. These august functions were committed to the charge of Ceres and of Bacchus; of the first especially, who had introduced laws, and taught the practice of agriculture. The Mysteries, instituted in honour of that goddess, soon obtained a conspicuous celebrity. They differed however in nothing from those that were afterwards established in other places, and which soon became numerous. In whatever place they were celebrated, or whatever form they assumed, they continued always essentially the same; and as they were but a portion of that religion, which, as we have seen, comprehended the universal system
of

Ceres

II.

CHAPTER II. of Nature, they must have had the same object.

Object of
the Myste-
ries.

AMONG those who have taken pleasure in disfiguring mythology, some have pretended that the object of the Mysteries was to unvell the errors of the former, and to instill into the people purer sentiments, by informing them with regard to the nature of the beings they adored, and by teaching them, "that Mercury, "Jupiter, Bacchus, and the whole rabble of "licentious deities, were only dead mortals; "subject in life to the same passions and infir- "mities with themselves; but having been, "on other accounts, benefactors to mankind, "grateful posterity had deified them; and, "with their virtues, had indiscreetly canoni- "zed their vices." This opinion belongs to Warburton†, and is founded, like the rest which he has adopted, on a pretended letter of Alexander the Great to his mother, related by St Augustine, Minutius Felix, and some others, and which ought to be ranked in the number of those pious frauds which the first Christians thought themselves at liberty to practise. We shall not stop to combat this

opinion,

† Divine Legation. Book 2.

opinion, of which we have already shewn the absurdity. It leads to the improbable supposition, that the Ancients cultivated two sorts of religion of opposite tendency, that the one condemned what the other enjoined, and that the people were at once impious and idolatrous.

CHAPTER

II.

FAR from destroying polytheism, in the sense in which this word ought to be taken, the Mysteries tended to establish it; but they confined it within its true bounds; they guarded it especially against the errors of the imagination; and having explained what it was necessary to understand by that multiplicity of gods, the objects of public veneration, they arose to the Supreme Intelligence who comprehends them all, and from whom they are all but an emanation. The true meaning of the adventures that were ascribed to them, of the fables that composed their history, was unfolded and explained. The principles of the universe, the most imposing phenomena of astronomy, and those arts that had served as the basis of society, all passed successively under review. They took particular care to commemorate the principal epochas of the world, which had

The Mysteries inculcated, 1. The unity of God, and explained the fables of mythology.

at

CHAPTER

II.

~~CHAPTER~~

at first been formed out of the bosom of Chaos, then alternately destroyed and renewed : lastly, they unveiled the picture of Science and of Religion uniting together for the happiness and instruction of mankind. The Mysteries alone were capable of interpreting the sacred emblems ; and thus, says Cicero, " when they " are well examined, and duly considered, they " illustrate the nature of things more than that " of the gods ".

BUT their principal object, under the name of Universal Nature, was the one unoriginated being, whose functions as well as attributes had been personified. The Mysteries, says Strabo †, were instituted only to preserve the honour due to the supreme being.

§. The dog-
ma of Pro-
vidence.

THESE alone, says Chrysippus, can communicate a just idea of him. They taught that he is the Supreme Ruler, that he governs all things, and disposes of all events ; that his eye beholds every action, and even the most secret thought. By thus placing Man under the im-
mediate

* De Nat. Deor. lib. 1. C. 43.

† Geog. lib. 10.

mediate inspection of the Deity, they inspired him with the love of virtue, and they served at the same time to give him just notions of the excellence and dignity of human nature.

CHAPTER

II.

THE dogma of the immortality of the soul is strictly connected with that of providence. Since there is a just God, who punishes and rewards; since he has stamped his image on our hearts, and given us those ideas of perfection to which we are continually approaching, he could not will that our expectation should be deceived, and he has therefore reserved us for the noblest purposes. This consolatory opinion opens to the sage an asylum, whence, like those who from an elevated station enjoy the prospect of the sea in a storm, he considers in tranquillity the tumultuous agitations of mortals, uncertain of their fate; while he, persuaded as he is that he shall receive the reward of his labours, with unwearied ardour devotes himself to the investigation of truth. The desire he has for immortality is, in his mind, the strongest assurance that he will obtain it. And indeed, if Nature herself had not engraven it on his heart, whence could be derived that anticipation of future ages, that love

3. That of
the immor-
tality of the
Soul,

CHAPTER
II.

love of glory which he extends beyond the limits of the tomb? Are not his thoughts bent on futurity? Is it not for posterity that he consumes himself with watching, that he devotes himself to meditation, and foregoes the enjoyment of his dearest pleasures? He plants trees that are not to bear fruit till long after his death; but he knows, that one day, when his grand-children shall come and repose beneath their shade, he shall hear and enjoy the benedictions bestowed on his memory. Yes, without a doubt, the soul survives the body. Let us believe the internal sense which proclaims to us this truth, rather than all the vain arguments that have been urged against it. And even though it should not rest on an indubitable foundation, why endeavour to destroy its probability? Why choke the precious germs of those virtues it gives birth to? 'Twas this that conducted three hundred Spartans to the defiles at Thermopylæ to serve as a barrier against innumerable armies; that sent Epaminondas to bury himself in the plains of Mantinea: it is this that, by promising to the warrior a crown of immortality, teaches him to prefer to the sweets of repose the honour of perishing

perishing for his country *. It alone inspires the courage, still more heroic of resisting oppression. How noble is the spectacle of Socrates, unjustly condemned, disdaining to have recourse to supplication, occupied the whole day of his death in consoling his friends, and while he holds in his hands the poisoned cup, inculcating upon them those sublime principles of the truth of which his reason, improved by long experience, had given him the most perfect conviction. Thus thought Cato, that virtuous Roman, whose inflexible soul never could be induced to bend the knee to tyranny, and who, after having supported to the last struggle the cause of liberty, regarded the moment of its extinction as that which Providence pointed out to him for quitting the post he had been destined to guard. Far be the maxims of those men from us, who maintain that every thing ends with this state of existence, and that when we cease to live we cease to be. Dreadful idea! fit only to overwhelm us with despair, and which, far from arming us against the fear of death, only makes its approach the more hideous. Ah! if it be given

CHAPTER

II.

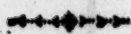
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to

* Cicero. Tuscul. l. i. c. 15.

CHAPTER

II.



to man to taste the unmingled pleasure of satisfaction with his own conduct, if he can depart from life as a satisfied guest rises from a banquet, it is only in the firm hope, that, after being freed from the illusions of sense, he goes to rejoin the Supreme Being, and to contemplate those eternal truths of which he is the source.

SUCH, in all ages, has been the language of true philosophy, and thus it has exalted the mind of Man, by assuring him of immortality. But when we ask what becomes of the Soul, and what fate she is reserved for, philosophy is forced to remain silent; besides, it lifts its voice only to a few enlightened minds, some of whom indeed have employed against it its own weapons. Religion possesses the double advantage of speaking to the people, and of substituting in the room of abstract speculation, which they are unable to comprehend, such sensible images as leave no doubt in the mind. It was one of her principle dogmas among the Ancients, that the breath which animates is a portion of the universal mind diffused over every particle of matter. "Man is like to God, said they; he is endowed with life and
" sense,

"sense, he can reflect on the past, and anticipate the future. He maintains an absolute empire over his body; he governs and moves it, as God governs the world, which is not less fragile or less perishable. The principle of action alone is eternal *." The Mysteries served chiefly to represent the state of the soul when it was released from its mortal encumbrance. They taught, not only the art of living well here, but of forming the highest hopes of futurity. "The vulgar, says Plutarch, believe that nothing remains after death: but we, initiated as we are in the sacred rites of Bacchus, and witnesses of his holy ceremonies, we know that there exists a future state †." Aristides, Strabo, Isocrates, and Eusebius, explained themselves also in the same terms. The pre-existence of the soul, and the dogma of the metempsychosis, which seems to be its natural consequence, were also taught in the Mysteries.

In general, the doctrine of a future life has been adopted by all nations, at least by all those that deserve to be cited as examples. Legislators

4. The doctrine of Rewards and Punishments.

K 2

* Cicero, Somn. Scip.

† Consol. ad Uxor.

CHAPTER II.

SECRET

gistrators considered it as the most effectual curb for restraining the passions of men, and they have employed every argument to establish this salutary doctrine, as we may be convinced by attending to the descriptions which the Ancients have left us of Hell.

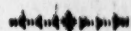
Of the an-
cient Hell.

This word signified among them *the residence of Souls*. Thither, after death, they repaired in crowds to receive remuneration for their deeds. Minos sat as judge, and as the names were drawn out of the fatal urn, he distributed to each his merited punishment or reward. Pluto, seated on a throne of ebony, presided over the infernal regions ; because, as we have already observed, in the symbolical religion of the Ancients, part of which was dedicated to the worship of the Stars, Winter was the night of nature, and because the Sun at that time took the name of King of the Shades. For this reason Pluto, who represented the sun, makes so important a figure in Mysteries destined to describe the empire of the dead. That gloomy region was situated at an immense distance, far beyond the limits of this universe. According to the au-

thor of the Theogony *, " as far as the heaven is distant from the earth, so far is the earth removed from the dark abyss. A mass of iron, falling from the top of the starry heavens, would take nine days and nine nights before it reached the surface of the earth ; and it would require the same time in falling from thence to Tartarus," the place destined for the punishment of the wicked.

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II.



THIS frightful abode was said to be twice as deep as it is distant from the brilliant summit of Olympus. It was surrounded by a triple wall, it was bathed by the flaming waters of Cocytus and of Phlegethon, and towers of iron guarded the entrance. The cruel Typhoea watched night and day at the gate, armed with serpents, which she shook over the heads of the guilty. Their groans, their doleful cries, mixed with the sound of their stripes, cause the wide abyss to resound. There are for ever shut up the impious Titans, and those not less audacious mortals who dared to resist the divinity ; Tityus, Ixion, Pirithous, and the impious Salmoneus. Perjury, adultery,

Tartarus

K 3

incest,

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER
II.
incest, and parricide, are likewise punished,
and those whose life has been sullied with odious crimes ; those who have not respected the
ties of blood, who have waged unjust wars,
who have sold their country ; those who have
dared to commit enormous wickedness, and
enjoyed the fruit of their crimes, are all con-
signed to the most cruel torments.

A LESS rigorous fate was reserved for him who had been guilty of smaller offences, or who, having committed crimes, had given signs of repentance. It was necessary that he should be punished till he had expiated them ; but when he had been in some sort regenerated and cleansed from the impurities contracted by guilt, he was admitted into the abodes of the blessed.

Elysum.

THAT place of delights was admirably contrasted with the dismal regions of Tartarus. The ground sparkled with gold and precious stones; its fertile plains were watered with a multitude of never-failing streams, which maintained a perpetual verdure. The flowers of Spring were mixed with the rich fruits of Autumn. A sky for ever serene and unclouded, a sun and stars from which incessantly flowed streams of living light;

light ; and, in fine, all the objects which the most brilliant imagination could conceive, were collected to embellish those happy plains. They were inhabited by virtuous men, the friends of justice, who had served their country, and cultivated the useful arts. They tasted a pleasure which nothing could embitter ; and the remembrance of the virtues they had practised on earth was for them a continual source of felicity. In the midst of the unmingled pleasures they enjoyed, they exercised themselves in the occupations which during life had obtained them the gratitude of their countrymen. The legislator contemplated the principles of that august and eternal law of which he had before but a glimpse ; and the assembly of the just that surrounded him were attentive to his instructions. The sight of arms, even in the bosom of peace and tranquillity, recalled to the remembrance of the hero those battles which he had fought in defence of his country ; while the poet, who had consecrated his harp to the worship of the gods, celebrated anew, in celestial strains, the power and benignity of the immortals.

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II.

The fear of
Hell among
the An-
cients.

WE may conceive what impression these images would make on the mind, when unceasingly presented to the eyes from earliest infancy. It is not to be doubted, that if the hope of felicity unbounded leads to virtue, the idea of endless punishment must have a still stronger influence on the conduct. The religion of the Ancients, which to us appears of so light a nature that we are apt to believe its only end was to flatter the senses, yet employed the most proper means for restraining the outrageous multitude. It alarmed them on all sides with the most frightful representations. A poet of antiquity* paints, in the strongest colours, that continual terror which takes possession of the human heart, which disturbs and poisons the pleasures of life, and which in every part of the earth has erected temples for the purpose of conciliating the gods. Plato, in the beginning of the first book of his Republic, represents an old man seized with fear at the approach of death, and full of inquietude with regard to objects that never occupy the season of health. Then it is, says he, that we reflect on our crimes, on the injustice we have committed, and that often, in our agitation,

* Lucretius, lib. 5.

agitation, we start in our sleep, and are frightened like children. As soon as some were found among the ancients who had overcome these fears, it was pretended that such had never existed among them: we might as reasonably judge of the public belief at this day, by the opinions in which some modern writers have been pleased to indulge themselves. The testimony of those of antiquity who opposed the prejudices of their times, their very attempt to dissipate those fears, and to turn them into ridicule, rather proves how deeply they were rooted. Observe with what solicitude Lucretius everywhere endeavours to burst the bonds of religion, and to fortify his readers against the threatnings of eternal punishment. The observation of Juvenal, so often cited, that nobody in his day believed in the fables of Hell, is that of an enlightened mind, which takes no part in the opinions of the vulgar. The same thing is to be said of what we read in Cicero, and in some other writers, on the same subject: and when Virgil exclaims, "Happy the man that can tread
"under foot inexorable Destiny, and the noise
"of devouring Acheron," he indicates, in a manner sufficiently precise, that it was the province

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vince of philosophy alone to shake off the yoke of custom, riveted by education.

Those who were unable to conquer these vain terrors, found consolations of a different kind. Religion stretched forth her kind hand to encourage their hopes, and to relieve their despondency. When remorse had brought back, within her pale, an unfortunate wanderer from the paths of justice, she informed him that, by a true confession of his guilt, and sincere repentance, forgiveness was to be obtained. With this view expiatory sacrifices were instituted, by means of which the guilty expected to participate in the happiness of the just.

THE nature of Tartarus has been explained, and the method observed in the distribution of rewards and punishments. All the institutions of the Ancients were directed to the public good, about which they were entirely occupied. They wished the man of plenty to be at the same time a good citizen; that the primary and most sacred of his duties should be to love his country, to defend it, and to consecrate the fruit of his labours to its service. Far from encouraging by vain promises that contemplative life which,

which, though it may well excite our admiration, or rather our astonishment, must always be the greatest scourge of civil society : the useful virtues alone were encouraged, and alone held intitled in this life, and in the next, to supereminent rewards. With them religion and patriotism were united : for their religion was not instituted in those unhappy times, when innumerable multitudes groaned beneath the cruel yoke of Despotism, or were exposed without defence to the incursions of barbarians ; nor when the deserts were filled with a croud of gloomy and melancholy minds, that soon overwhelmed the world with superstition. In Greece its origin was the same with that of the Republics ; and having contributed to their establishment, it was the interest of religion to watch over their preservation and prosperity.

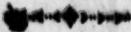
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ACCORDINGLY the initiated were informed of the miserable condition out of which their ancestors had been extricated : they were told, how, from a state of savageness and ferocity, they had been reclaimed to a happier way of life, by submitting to the government of laws. We must not then be surprised if the greater part of the initiatory ceremonies in the Mysteries had

The My-
steries shew-
ed the ad-
vantage of
Society.

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II.



had a reference to agriculture, which had operated this important revolution, nor that the gods by whom it was invented were those who presided at these solemn festivals. In describing the establishment of societies, they took care to inculcate that original equality after which men so ardently sigh, which can only be found in a state of nature, or rather, which never did exist if that state itself is a chimera. But since, in the best regulated governments, each individual is obliged to sacrifice a part of his liberty to the general utility, Religion alone can restore us to our original rights. It teaches us, that all are equal, and that there is no real pre-eminence but that which is conferred by virtue.

6. They prescribed equality, virtue, and all moral duties.

THE initiated considered themselves as members of one great family. They were taken indifferently out of the various orders of the people; and the distinctions of rank, of birth, and of fortune, gave place to those of brotherly love and mutual benevolence. And as the Mysteries had established certain relations between man and the Deity, they served also to shew the former what duties he owed his neighbour, and they

they prescribed to him rules of conduct in every situation of life.

LASTLY, their object was to purify the soul, to dispose it to receive the sublimest ideas, and to raise it to the contemplation of intellectual things. This last degree of perfection was the completion of the doctrine which the Mysteries unfolded. But none could attain it, except such as were pure and undefiled; who had given instances of strength, of courage, and of attachment to virtue, and who had been tried in the school of adversity. Such was undoubtedly the motive of the probation which the initiated were obliged to undergo.

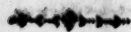
WE have now seen for what purpose the Mysteries were instituted. Their principal object was the knowledge of the supreme being, and the explication of the different fables attributed to the gods by whom that being was represented; the doctrine of a Providence, the dogma of the immortality of the soul, and that of future punishments and rewards; the history of the establishment of civil society, as well as the invention of the arts amongst which agriculture held the first place. They had at the

CHAPTER II.

7. They disclosed the sublimest truths.

Recapitulation of the different objects of the Mysteries.

CHAPTER
II.



Ceremonies
of the Mys-
teries.

the same time a tendency to inspire the love of justice, of humanity, of all the patriotic virtues; and they joined to the precepts of the purest morality, a display of truths of the utmost importance.

To these different objects all the mystical ceremonies had a reference, as it will be easy to perceive, by the simple detail which we mean to give of them. Some of these ceremonies may perhaps appear ridiculous, and little suited to the dignity of a great people: but it must be remembered, that they belong to a symbolical religion that explained itself only in figures. They are, however, interesting in so far as they illustrate the origin of several institutions still practised among ourselves, which sometimes have only varied their appearance that they might adapt themselves to the worship of modern nations.

Of Initia-
tion.

WHAT was called Initiation among the Ancients, was admission into the sacred Mysteries; and as that august ceremony was, as it were, a transition to a new life, it has been compared to Death, of which it was the image. To descend to the shades properly signified

to

to be initiated, as Servius has remarked †, and we may consult on this subject a very curious fragment preserved by Stobæus. Hence, in the fabulous ages of antiquity, are so many visits recorded that were made by heroes to the infernal mansions of the dead. That enterprize was ranked in the number of their most brilliant exploits: it gave fame to Ulysses, Æneas, and even to Theseus, whose actions seem more properly to belong to history. It was chiefly for legislators, for chiefs of colonies, for founders of empires, that the glory of this exploit was reserved. Accordingly, of all those who penetrated to the gloomy regions, Orpheus is the most celebrated. Being instructed in the school of the Egyptians, and imbued with their wisdom, the Western nations considered him as the author of all their civil and religious institutions. He was represented in the Elysian fields arrayed in a flowing robe, and uttering those divine accents that had formerly set open to him the gates of the infernal kingdom, when he went to solicit the restoration of his beloved Eurydice. His grief when she was again ravished from him,

CHAPTER

II.

Fictions it
gave riseto.

his

† Serv. ad *Æneid.* lib. 6.

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II.

his lamentations, re-echoed from the tops of the Riphean mountains to the frozen shores of the Tanais; his dreadful end, and the sweet accents of his voice, that in spite of the leaden hand of death still repeated the name he held so dear, have been described in the most enchanting numbers, and make the most beautiful episode in the most perfect poem that antiquity has transmitted to our times. The circumstances of his descent into hell have a reference to emblems that are now unknown. But it is probable that the author of the Georgics conformed to the sacred traditions that were current in his time.

Fictions of
the Ancients
compared with
those of the
Moderns.

WE cannot help observing in this place, the difference between the fictions of the Ancients and those of the Moderns. It does not appear that the imaginary heroes of chivalry were ever actuated by the great motives of religion, or even of patriotism. The St Graal, which they swore to defend, seems merely to exhibit a picture of the superstition and gross ignorance that then prevailed. Though, for the most part, inrolled under the banner of the cross, their high feats of arms consisted in engagements with giants of enormous stature, in bidding defiance

defiance to the bravest warriors, in storming castles, and in exhibiting prodigies of intemperate valour. The enchantments of the old romance, and the illusions of fairy power, leave no impression on the mind of the reader that can afford him satisfaction. It was otherwise with the Grecian fictions, in which the marvellous was derived from a sacred source, and where the imagination, already surrounded by magnificent objects, of which it could dispose at its pleasure, was under no necessity to invent either the monstrous or fantastic. The epic poem had already acquired all the majesty that belongs to it. And how interesting to the masters of the world must not that poem have been, which illustrated their origin, while it comprehended whatever religion deems most venerable and august! Every circumstance leads us to believe, what Warburton has most ingeniously demonstrated, that the description of the infernal regions in the *Æneid* is a representation of the sacred Mysteries, and of the ceremonies that attended their celebration.

CHAPTER II.

THE Mysteries were divided into two kinds, the greater and the less. The latter were only

Two sorts of Mysteries,

CHAPTER

II.

~~and the lesser~~

The lesser

Mysteries.

ly a preparation, a sort of noviciate, which it was necessary to perform before the aspirant could be admitted to the former, of which they were the image, as sleep, says Euripides, is the image of death; and they chiefly consisted in lustrations and purifications of every kind.

AFTER the candidate had been sufficiently exercised by a long fast, and a series of austere observances, he was led into a chapel on the banks of a river, consecrated for the purpose, where he was plunged into the water as an emblem of regeneration. This ceremony Tertullian compares to that of Baptism, of which it was indeed the symbol. The candidate was even presented by a kind of introducer, who performed the office of a father, and may be called by the name of Sponsor. The Priest, who had the care of the preparatory lustrations, was called the Hydranus. A victim was then sacrificed, which was generally a sow with young, probably because that animal was made use of to signify the fecundity of nature; and the candidate having taken an oath that he would reveal nothing of what was to be communicated, various questions were proposed to him. He was asked, for instance, if
he

he had eaten fruit ; he replied, " I have fasted, " I have drank of the *cyceon*, I have taken " the *cistus*, I have put into the *calathus* ; and " having operated, I have put back the *calathus* into the *cistus* *." We shall not attempt to explain these mysterious formulas, of which it is now impossible to conjecture the sense. Some authors, and among others M. Gebelin, think they referred to the productions of the earth. We shall only say, that the *cyceon* was a mixture of wine, of honey, of water, and meal. As to the *calathus*, or sacred basket, it was carried in great pomp on cars in the solemn processions at the feasts of Ceres, and then the people were prohibited from appearing at any place from which it could be seen. As it passed along, every eye was fixed on the ground.

WHEN the candidate had answered to all the questions, and had performed the customary requisites, the elements of the secret doctrine, in which he was afterwards to be perfectly instructed, were explained to him, and thus he was gradually prepared for admission into the sanctuary. But it was necessary to undergo

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new

* Clemens Alexandrin.

CHAPTER

II.

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new preparations, and to suffer new trials more severe than the former. He was still but a *Myfter*, or adept, the name given to those who had been admitted only to the lesser Mysteries: it was not till he had been initiated into the greater, that he obtained the name of *Epoetes*, or contemplatist.

Of the great
mysteries.

THE interval between the performance of these two ceremonies was at least a year. We shall leave to the learned the care of fixing the particular period, and time of their celebration; such researches do not fall within our plan. The genius of the Ancient Religion is our object, and we shall confine ourselves to those circumstances which peculiarly characterize it.

**Triests em-
ployed in
them.**

EVERY circumstance in the great Mysteries conspired to produce the end for which they had been instituted. Not only the functions of the Priests, but their dress had a particular signification. The ministers that presided over the Initiations were four in number. The Supreme Pontif was called *Hierophanta*. His head was encircled with a diadem, he represented the *Demiourgos*, or the Genius that created

created the world, and it was his province alone to receive the initiated. This dignity was enjoyed during life. Among the Athenians it was hereditary in the family of the Eumolpidæ. He who was invested with this sacred office was enjoined to celibacy; it was necessary too that he should be of a proper age, and have a commanding tone of voice. Next in dignity was the *Daduchus*, or *Lampadophorus*; that is, the torch-bearer, remarkable for his hair and the fillets that bound his head. He had the charge of purifying the adept before initiation: a lively image of the sun, with all whose attributes he was adorned. The third minister was the *Epibomus*, or assistant at the altar, who carried the symbol of the moon: his name declares his function. Lastly, the *Hieroceryx*, or chief of the sacred heralds, had the care of keeping off the profane, of instructing the aspirant, and of reciting to him the formulas which he was to pronounce. He held in his hand a caduceus, and was invested with the garments that belonged to Mercury. Hence we infer, that the Mysteries were intended to represent the system of the world; and indeed, in some of them, the different orders of the initiated bore the names

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II.

of the twelve signs of the zodiac, and of the different constellations.

BESIDES these principal ministers there were several others of subordinate rank; and priestesses, called *Melisse*, received the women who chose to be initiated. There was also a priest who was entrusted with the charge of the Mysteries, and who maintained order during the performance of the ceremonies. He had particular officers under him, and was called King: for as these institutions had been founded by the first chiefs at a time when the sacerdotal office was united with the sovereign authority, the people, when they became free, thought themselves obliged to respect whatever had a reference to religion. Thus the Romans, who held the name of King in abhorrence, chose one, however, on certain occasions, to assist at the sacrifices: and in the Republic of Athens, he who had the particular superintendence of the Mysteries was called King Archon.

Ceremonies
at the great
Mysteries.

It is now time to accompany the aspirant into the interior of the temple, and to enjoy with him the wonderful spectacle that was there to strike his senses. The ceremony was performed

performed at night, that obscurity might render the scene more awful. Those who were to be received advanced in silence; they were crowned with leaves of myrtle, and they washed their hands at the entry of the portico. But the cleanness of the body was only emblematical of the purity of the soul: and that no spot might remain, that they might efface even the remembrance of their faults, they made confession to the Hierophanta, after having sworn that they would reveal every action of their life. It was on a similar occasion that the priest, having ordered Lysander to declare all the crimes he had committed; "Is it you, or the Gods," that enjoin me this confession?" said he. "The Gods," replied the priest. "Then do you retire," said Lysander; "if they ask me, I will answer them." It may be presumed, that a common citizen would not have ventured on language so bold. Indeed the greater part of those who were to be initiated approached with religious awe, and were generally induced to that step from an ardent desire of being delivered from the stings and horrors of conscience.

CHAPTER
II.

Confession

THE Hiero-ceryx began the initiation, by repeating the customary formulas. Hence,

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hence,

Opening of
the Great
Mysteries.

CHAPTER

III

bence, ye profane, cried he ; and if there is among you any impious or wicked person, any sectary of Epicurus, (and afterwards they added any Christian,) let him instantly retire. The murderer of Agrippina, when about to enter the sacred precincts of Eleusis, was checked by a voice which prohibited any parricide from approaching ; and he withdrew, not daring to pollute the Mysteries with his presence. The herald then continued ; *Let those alone approach who are pure in heart, and who acknowledge one God.* After this proclamation, a new and dreadful oath was required of the candidates, and many other questions were put to them. One of the answers was this : *I have eaten out of the tambour, I have drank out of the cymbal, I have carried the kernos, I have entered the nuptial bed* *. The books containing the sacred rites and formulas, which were read with a loud voice to the initiated, were kept inclosed between two stones, whence they were only taken on solemn occasions.

WHEN

* Clemens Alexandrin. M. Gebelin supposes that the words *tambour*, *cymbal*, and *kernos*, signified vessels containing different fruits.

WHEN the preparatory ceremonies were concluded, the trials began, which in many places were dreadful, and often dangerous; but in general they were confined to simple shews and representations, calculated however to produce a very great effect. Continual alternations of light and darkness, claps of thunder, fantoms, hideous spectres, and dreadful cries in the midst of the silence of night, struck the initiated with horror, and froze his blood. After having been divested of his garments, he was girt with the skin of a fawn, to shew that he ought now to be separated from every thing profane. As the Mysteries were an emblem of death, or a sort of regeneration, it was necessary that he should appear to be resuscitated, as an emblem of new life. He was presented with a crown, which he trod under foot, and as soon as the sword was held over his head, he feigned to fall down dead, then seemed again to return to life. Commodus, assisting one day at the mysteries of Mithras, was not satisfied with this counterfeited death, he was wicked enough to feast his eyes with the sight of a real murder. After these different ceremonies, the candidate received the distinguishing robe, which he ever afterwards wore as an honourable badge.

CHAPTER

II.

Trials, and

of Mysteries

IN

CHAPTER

II.

Entry of the
Initiated in-
to the Tem-
ple,

IN this condition he waited till he received permission to enter the temple. "Now, says
"Claudian, I see the sacred walls begin to shake;
"and vivid light, flashing from the lofty roof,
"announces the approach of the god: already
"from the depths of the earth is heard the tre-
"mendous voice, and the temple reverberates
"the awful sound." At last the portals open;
at a distance appears a statue, magnificently adorned, and resplendent with light, which is meant to signify Universal Nature. Now the happy candidate is surrounded only with the most agreeable objects. He finds himself transported into meads enamelled with flowers; he hears on all sides a celestial harmony: and when he begins to view the horrid image of Tartarus, the scene is immediately changed, and the enchanting fields of Elysium open upon his sight. The sudden transition from the realms of darkness to that delightful abode, forms an admirable contrast in that part of the *Æneid* where the poet opens to his hero the prospect of those blissful mansions. That description is made with so much art, it is full of such masterly strokes of genius, that though we were ever so little sensible to harmony, we may in some measure conceive from it the various impressions which
would

would agitate the soul of the spectator in these Mysteries.

CHAPTER
II.

The Autopsia.

WHEN the aspirant arrived at the end of his labours, he received his reward; he was declared *Egyptes*, and he enjoyed the *Autopsia*, or the contemplation; because he was now permitted to contemplate that truth, after which he had so long sighed, and which was now to be revealed to him. The Hierophanta, who was the exclusive interpreter of the will of the gods, first made an oblation of bread, while he pronounced some mysterious words. This was called the *chaste bread*, because none fed on it but the pure, and it was only distributed to the priests employed in the service of the altar, or to those who approached the sacred Mysteries with suitable dispositions. At this time the Pontif took an opportunity of recalling to the minds of the assistants the duties of morality, and of recommending to them the practice of every virtue; and then he began the solemn prayers with the following invocation:

"I am to reveal a mystery to the initiated,
"Exclude the unhallowed and profane: and
"do thou, O Muses, offspring of the splen-
"did

Invocation
of the Hierophanta.

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II.

“ did Selene, give an attentive ear to my song,
 “ for truth shall be displayed without disguise,
 “ Beware, lest prejudice delude thee, or prevent
 “ thee from enjoying the happiness that the
 “ knowledge of truth alone can bestow. Con-
 “ template this heavenly oracle, and preserve
 “ it in purity of heart and of mind. Tread in
 “ the paths of Justice; adore the sole ruler of
 “ the universe. He is one, and independent.
 “ All other beings owe their existence to him
 “ alone; he acts in them and through them;
 “ he sees all, but has never yet been beheld by
 “ mortal eyes.”

Chorus of
the Initia-
ted.

THE crowd of Priests and of the initiated
 celebrated in concert this first cause. They
 addressed to him their vows; they adored him
 under every form in which he thinks proper
 to represent himself, and by which he conti-
 nually makes manifest his power. All the
 gods that compose the celestial hierarchy, and
 who were only attributes of the Supreme In-
 telligence, were by turns invoked; and, while
 the purest incense burnt upon the altars, the
 whole temple resounded with the names of
 Vulcan; of Minerva; of Pan, lord of universal
 matter; of old Saturn; of Hercules the power-
 ful,

all, the magnanimous, the invincible; of the great Jupiter, and above all, of the beneficent Ceres, who had so benefited the human race. Some of these sacred songs have escaped the devastations of time; such as the hymns of Orpheus, to whom is also ascribed that sung by the Hierophanta; and precious fragments they are whoever may have been the author; they certainly belong to the most remote antiquity, and it is now impossible to explain them, if they are not applicable to the initiations. Indeed, as the Abbé Souchay has well observed *, “these hymns could not have had any other object. They all begin, says he, “by earnest invocations, and by such energetic formulas as these, *Give ear unto me; I invoke thee; I call upon thee.*” They abound in epithets expressive of the power, or of the attributes of the Deity; the recitation of them was preceded by the burning of incense, or perfumes in honour of the gods.

CHAPTER
II.

If we may believe Warburton, and after him Voltaire, the beginning of the Theogony of Sanchoniatho, which comprised an allegorical

In what
consisted
the secret
doctrine.

* Acad. des Belles Lettres, tomes 12. and 16.

CHAPTER II. **Mythical description of the origin of the world,**
 was also read at the Mysteries. It is probable
 that this was the time chosen for explaining
 the physical revolutions of the globe, and for
 unfolding the sense of all the fables of mytho-
 logy. "The doctrine of the Great Mysteries,"
 says Clemens Alexandrinus, related to the
 "whole universe; here all instruction ended;
 "Nature, and the things it contains, were un-
 "veiled." The initiated were informed with
 regard to the symbolical representations of the
 fixed stars, of the planets, and in general of
 the mundane system, "by shewing them a
 "ladder, says Celsus, in which were seven in-
 "terstitial spaces, with an eighth at the top of
 "all." Various emblems were employed to
 exhibit the glorious course of the sun, whose
 worship made such an essential part of religion.
 That god who was dead, and was revived, we
 find a principal character in the Mysteries of
 every country; Cadmillus among the Cabiri,
 Atys in Phrygia, Adonis in Syria, Osiris a-
 mong the Egyptians, and in Greece the young
 Jacchus torn by the Titans. Indeed all the
 festivals that succeeded a time of mourning,
 were so many representations of the God of
 day in the different seasons of the year. In
 the

the same manner agriculture and its happy effects were figured by the wanderings of Isis, or those of Ceres, and by the history of Proserpine. Lastly, after the picture of all the sciences, of which religion was the depositary, had been exhibited, it was shewn how the intelligences that constitute the three great orders of the Gods, and who, existing in all space, are engaged in maintaining the universal harmony, were reunited to the Supreme Being, of whose essence they were originally a part.

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II.



BUT it was not now the Pontif who taught this doctrine of the great soul of the world: Nature herself appeared to the initiated, and a voice was heard pronouncing the following words: "Moved by thy prayers, I am come: I am Nature, the universal parent; the sovereign of the elements; the spring of ages; the first of the gods; the queen of the Manes; under one form I represent all the gods and all the goddesses. I dispense the light of heaven; I agitate the billows of the ocean; I encompass the infernal regions with silence and horror. All nations

Appear-
ance of Na-
ture.

Apul. Metamorph. l. 11.

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II.

" nations acknowledge my power. The Phry-
gians call me the Mother of the Gods ; the
inhabitants of Cyprus, Venus ; those of A-
thens, Ceres ; but in Egypt, and among the
people on whom the sun first sheds his early
beams, sages, learned in the ancient doctrine,
have called me Isis. Under all these names,
and with many different ceremonies, I am
the only deity whom the universe invokes."

This passage will not permit us to doubt the
identity of the Mysteries, which no where dif-
fered essentially, as we have already observed.
The ceremonies might indeed vary according to
circumstances, and especially according to the
different genius of the people that performed
them. They were cruel and sanguinary in the
East, where despotism made a jest of human
sacrifices ; in the mild climate of Greece they
tended only to make virtuous citizens ; and
in every country they were incorporated with
the particular form of worship ; but the same
divinity was always adored, and that divinity
was no other than universal Nature.

Thus she proceeded. " Be just, and thou
shalt be happy ; thou shalt live full of glory
under

"under my protection; and when thou ar-
 "rivest at the end of thy course, death shall
 "open to thee an entrance into the Elysian
 "fields. But if, by an ardent zeal for my
 "worship, and by the practice of virtue, thou
 "shalt approve thyself worthy of my favour,
 "know that I have the power of prolonging
 "thy days beyond the period assigned to thee
 "by destiny."

CHAPTER
II.

THE symbollic image of the fecundity of Na-
 ture was then exhibited; an image that expres-
 sed the means by which she renews herself in
 the class of organized bodies, and which, hav-
 ing been at first chosen by a simple and rude
 people, had continued in use after they were
 civilized and corrupted, because it had been
 originally consecrated to religious purposes.
 The *Phallus* was carried in great pomp; in
 the ceremonies of the women, the *Kteis* was
 made use of; and in spite of the remonstrances
 of the fathers of the church, it would appear
 that this ceremony still continued to be respec-
 ted. But it conveyed no impure idea to the
 imagination, for the initiated addressed this
 prayer to Nature.

M

HAIL!

CHAPTER

II.

Prayer of
the Initia-
ted.

“ HAIL ! holy and unwearied benefactress
 “ of the human race ! thou who, like a tender
 “ mother, lavishest on mortals thy precious
 “ gifts, and who stretchest forth thy hands to
 “ assist the unhappy, all hail ! I invoke thee,
 “ thou powerful deity ; thee, whom the Gods
 “ of heaven adore, and whom the Gods
 “ of hell dread : thee, who hast impressed
 “ motion on the celestial spheres ; who con-
 “ tinuest to nourish the fires of the sun ; who
 “ governest the universe ; and whose empire
 “ extends even to Tartarus. Thou speakest,
 “ and the stars make answer ; the gods re-
 “ joice, the seasons succeed each other, and
 “ the elements are obedient to thy voice. By
 “ thy order the winds rage, and the clouds
 “ are collected ; plants germinate, and issue
 “ from the bosom of the earth ; animals people
 “ the forests and the mountains ; the serpent
 “ hides himself in obscure retreats ; the inha-
 “ bitants of air, the monsters of the ocean,
 “ the whole universe is subject to thy com-
 “ mand. Who can worthily celebrate thy
 “ praises, O august divinity ! Engrossed with
 “ thy majesty, I shall incessantly behold thee,
 “ and contemplate thy divine perfections. May
 “ thy

"thy sacred image never cease to dwell in the
"bottom of my heart * !"

CHAPTER
II.

HARE the initiation ended, and the assembly
was dismissed by a formula, borrowed from
the Phenician *keffi omphet*; which signified,
watch, and be pure.

End of the
great Mys-
teries.

THUS ended these Mysteries, so justly re-
nowned in ancient times, and which alone, as
we may now be convinced, constituted, properly
speaking, the essence of religion. They were
instituted in great numbers, as each deity, be-
sides the public worship which was addressed
to him, had likewise a particular and secret
service. But after the Mysteries of Isis in
Egypt, which had served as a model for al-
most all the rest, the principal were those of
the Cabiri in Samothracia, in which the an-
cient language of Orpheus was again found
in the names given to the gods there invoked;
those of Cybele in Phrygia; of Venus in the
island of Cyprus; of Vulcan at Lemnos; of
Jupiter in Crete; of Mithras in Asia Minor,
famous for the austerities and rigorous obser-
vances that were there exacted; and, lastly,
those of Bacchus and of Ceres in Greece.

Enumera-
tion of the
principal
Mysteries
of the An-
cients.

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BUT

* Apul. Metam. l. 11.

CHAPTER

II.

OF THE MYSTERIES

OF THESE AT

Eleusis.

BUT these last soon began to eclipse all the rest. According to Cicero, people came from all quarters to be initiated here. "Is there a single Greek, says Aristides, a single Barbarian so ignorant, so impious, as not to consider Eleusis as the common temple of the world?" That temple was built at a town in the neighbourhood of Athens, on the ground that had first yielded the bounties of Ceres. It was remarkable for the magnificence of its architecture, as well as for its immense extent; and Strabo observes, that it would contain as many people as the largest Amphitheatre. We are inclined to adopt the ingenious etymology of the word Eleusis given by the learned author of *Antiquity Unveiled*. He supposes that this word, by which the Mysteries of Athens were denominated, is not derived from the place where they were celebrated, but from their object; which was to obtain pardon of God: this is what Eleusis properly signifies; so that the city seems to have obtained its name from these solemn festivals. The same thing may be said, he adds, of the word Ilyssus, a little river in which the purifications were performed, and of the Elysium, or place of the blessed, names

names which seem to have originated in the same way. CHAPTER II.

NOTHING could equal the pomp or the majesty of the ceremonies of Eleusis. The great Mysteries lasted nine days; each of which was destined to particular rites, a circumstantial detail of which is to be found in Meursius, or in the works of St Croix and Gebelin, who have followed him. During that time no person could be arrested; the courts were shut, and business was suspended. These festivals, consecrated to the worship of Ceres, were the most solemn part of the religion of the Greeks.

THEY had still other festivals in honour of that goddess, all equally mysterious. Such as those of the Thesmophoria, for instance, which had a considerable resemblance to the Eleusinian ceremonies, and in which the Priestesses alone performed the functions of the Hierophanta, of the Daduchus, and of the other assistants; probably, because it was before the statue of Ceres Thesmophoros that the women were initiated.

Other festivals that had the same object. Thesmophoria.

CHAPTER

II.

Bacchanalia.
No.

THE Bacchanalia, or Mysteries of Bacchus, are not less celebrated. They too were divided into greater and less. We know the violent agitations of the initiated at these feasts, their transports, and the kind of fury that animated them, when, with the Thyrsus in their hands, they made the woods and the mountains resound with the cries of *Io Bacche, Evæ Sabasi, Evæ Bacche*. But in the midst of their inebriation, and of that noisy and tumultuous joy, they were instructed in the most sublime dogmas; and from them arose the Orphicks, a sect which, among the Ancients, were attached both to religion and philosophy.

THESE Bacchanalia form an ever-memorable epoch in the history of the arts. They were originally accompanied with dancing, and with numerous bands of musicians, who, pretending to imitate the petulant gaiety of the Satyrs, of the Sileni, and Mænades, celebrated in their rude songs the God of the Vintage. This gross spectacle gave birth to regular and more decent representations. Thespis had led his actors, sullied with dirt, through the towns. Inspired by Bacchus himself, Eschylus was the first

first who found the art of moving the spectators by representing only eminent characters ; and tragedy soon acquired, in the hands of Sophocles and Euripides, the last degree of perfection. But it still retained somewhat of its mystic original, and though already possessed of the power of exciting the strongest passions, it presented, for the most part, to the Greeks, only the adventures of gods, or of the heroes of fabulous antiquity.

EVERY thing then concurred to recall to the mind of the Greeks the religion they had been taught to revere. The Mysteries were the most important part of it, the only part indeed worthy of the name, as they inspired the deepest veneration. These are the first and the most august of all ceremonies, says Aristotle. Prætextat calls them *the preservers of the human race* ; and, according to Plato, they could not have been invented but by men of superior genius. This philosopher even adds, that in order to attain the abode of the blessed, initiation was necessary, and that those who neglected it would certainly be precipitated to the bottom of the abyss.

Importance
of the Mys-
teries.

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Initiation
regarded as
a rigorous
duty.

WE ought to rank among the principal dogmas adopted by the Ancients, that which made initiation be considered as a rigorous and indispensable duty. They believed firmly, that without it there was no chance for salvation, if we may venture to use the expression. Hence their zeal for these Mysteries. Apuleius describes to us the crowds of men and women of every age and condition who pressed to be admitted. The neglect of them was looked upon as sacrilege. The superstitious man in Theophrastus was eager to inform himself, if all those who sailed with him in the same vessel had been initiated. Some waited till the hour of death before fulfilling this duty; undoubtedly, that they might be pure when they appeared in the sight of the terrible Judge: many Christians too, in the primitive church, deferred baptism till their last moments. In pursuance of the same idea, children were initiated in their cradle. It is needless to say, that in such cases none of the pompous ceremonies which we have described were observed. The secret doctrine was revealed only to such as were able to comprehend it, and who had undergone the customary probation. But here initiation consisted in

In the mere expiatory ceremonies. The custom was founded on the opinion held forth in the Mysteries themselves; that we are guilty at the moment of birth; that this life is destined to expiate crimes committed in a prior state of existence; and that the soul cannot aspire after a happier lot so long as it remains sullied and polluted with its original stain. The tender victims that were torn by untimely fate from their mother's bosom, and whose eyes had hardly opened on the light of this world, went to occupy a separated place in Tartarus, where they bewailed their hard fate in plaintive cries and lamentations.

BAYLE's ideas revolted at this seeming injustice. "The first thing, says he, that was met with, on entering the infernal regions, was the place of infants, who never ceased to weep. What could be more infamous than the punishment of those little innocents, who had never been guilty of any crime?" This reproach would be well founded, if the people had been to answer at the tribunal of reason. But it would be easy to exculpate the Ancients by arguments employed

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II.

Motive of
that belief.

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Happiness
promised to
the initia-
ted.

ed at this very day, although they had not the advantage of the light which we enjoy *.

No one could be admitted to Elysium, if he had not performed the expiations that religion enjoined. "The sun shines but for us, ex-claims, in Aristophanes †, the chorus of the initiated, we only receive pleasure from his beams. For us alone the meadows are enamelled with flowers; even for us who are initiated, and who have learned to perform all acts of piety and justice." Indeed they alone were reputed happy in this life, and they died in the hope of entering into a state of still greater felicity. As one of them was boasting of the blessings that were destined for him, Why then do you not go to enjoy them? said a Lacedemonian. The crowd of profane, on the contrary, had all the punishments of Tartarus to expect; and it was not enough that

* Warburton accounts for this seeming injustice, by supposing it a provision of the Lawgiver, for the security of infancy against the horrid practice of exposing children, which was universal, and had almost erased the sense of morality and instinct.

† Ran. Act 1. Scene 4.

that their lives were pure, and that they had been distinguished by irreproachable manners. The devout Polytheist condemned to punishment the man who had only been virtuous. "What! cried Diogenes, shall Agesilaus and Epaminondas be precipitated to Erebus? and shall the vile Petæcion enjoy eternal felicity?"

THE religion of the Ancients did not then merely consist in show and external ceremony, as has been often asserted. It exacted of its votaries implicit faith; it enjoined the most rigorous observances: and if it seemed indifferent to the multiplicity of fables and traditions, to which its allegorical genius gave ample occasion, if it even allowed the poets to fashion them at their pleasure, it resumed all its rights, whenever its dogmas and the principal objects of its worship were attacked. In the Mysteries especially, it was particularly rigid and severe; it became intolerant, cruel, and even unjust. One of the chief articles in the accusation of Socrates, was that of having neglected initiation. His enemies prevailed; and the man who had been declared by the oracle itself the wisest of men, was found guilty of impiety: he who had placed his confidence

in

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Threat-
nings to
those that
were not.

Religious
intolerance
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cients with
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the Myste-
ries.

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in the remuneration of a just God, whom he had instructed the people to know and to love, and who, during the course of a life dedicated to the practice of Virtue, had never ceased to inculcate on his fellow-citizens the great duties of Morality. But whatever reproach posterity may think due to the perpetrators of this action, it still shews the attachment they entertained for the national religion. They left to philosophers the liberty of imagining and of explaining systems, and of deducing whatever consequences from them they chose, provided they did not touch on the Mysteries, that is, on the national belief. Aristotle was brought before the judges, and accused of having sacrificed to the manes of his wife, with ceremonies in use at the Eleusinian festivals, and he was obliged to fly to Chalcis; but, what is remarkable, he ordered in his will, that a statue should be erected to Ceres. The poet Eschylus run still a greater risk. It was thought that in one of his pieces he had made allusions to the Mysteries. He was forced to take refuge at the foot of the altar of Bacchus, and he could not appease the multitude, till he had proved that he was not initiated. But nothing throws so much light on the character of the Athenians

Athenians as their conduct to Alcibiades, on an important occasion, in which the interests of their country were sacrificed to those of religion. Plutarch has transmitted to us a relation of the circumstances of this affair, from which we give the following abridged account :

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Relation of
what hap-
pened to
Alcibiades.

In the course of the Peloponnesian war, when Athens, having arrived at the height of its power, meditated the conquest of Sicily, and every thing being ready for an expedition which Alcibiades was to command, the city was filled with armaments, and preparations of every kind, when an unforeseen accident attracted the public attention. The hermes, or statues of Mercury, which abounded in all the streets of the town, were one day found mutilated and defaced. Immediately terror and consternation seized the citizens. The strictest scrutiny was made into this transaction ; the senate and the people assembled several times in the space of a few days to discover the authors of the sacrilege. In the midst of the general agitation, witnesses were produced by the orator Androcles, who accused Alcibiades of having committed the outrage ; and, what was much more grievous,

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grievous, they made oath that at a feast he, with several of his companions, had counterfeited the ceremonies of the holy Mysteries. The relation of such sacrilege instantly excited the warmest indignation ; but the fury of the people by degrees abated when they reflected on the abilities of Alcibiades, on the affection which the soldiers bore him, and on the numerous troops which he himself had raised for the service of the state, who would perhaps refuse to proceed if he was not to command them. His enemies, that he might not on this account escape them, contrived another expedient : they proposed to allow his departure for Sicily, under pretence that it would materially injure the service, if the captain of the enterprize should be detained when the troops were in hourly expectation of orders to proceed : that, in the mean time, judges should be appointed, and a day assigned to him in which he might answer to the crimes that had been laid to his charge.

ALCIBIADES perceived the malice of this artful delay. He represented how difficult it would be for him to fulfil the duties of a General, when his mind was tortured with suspense,
arising

rising from the nature of the delinquency of which he had been accused. "I shall deserve death, said he, if I am not able to justify myself; but if I am now found innocent, I shall have only the enemies of the state to contend with, and shall not be obliged to suffer the attacks of calumniators." His reasons were not relished, and he had orders to sail. But what he had foreseen came to pass. His enemies took advantage of his absence to excite against him the hatred of the public, and to accomplish his ruin. Accusations were greedily received, the accused were prosecuted with rigour, and more than three hundred persons were involved in this famous prosecution; among whom was the orator Andocides, who had no other means of escaping the vengeance of the laws, than by confessing the crime.

ALCIBIADES had hardly arrived in Sicily when he was recalled. The tenor of his accusation, which has been preserved by the historian of his life, deserves to be detailed.

"Theſſalus, the ſon of Cimon, of the ward of
 "Laciades, doth accuſe Alcibiades, the ſon of
 "Clinias, of the ward of Scambonides, of hav-
 "ing inſulted the goddeſſes Ceres and Proſer-
 pine,

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“ pine, by representing in derision the holy
“ Mysteries, and shewing them to his compa-
“ nions in his own house ; where, being habi-
“ ted in such robes as are used by the chief
“ Priest when he shews the holy things, he
“ assumed the name of Hierophanta ; Poli-
“ tion, that of the torch-bearer ; and Theodo-
“ rus, of the ward of Phegea, performed the
“ office of the sacred herald, saluting the rest
“ of the company as priests and initiated per-
“ sons. All which was done contrary to the
“ holy laws and institutions of the Eumol-
“ pidæ, and of the priests and other officers of
“ the holy Mysteries of the temple at Eleusis.”

ALCIBIADES, apprehensive of the consequences of this accusation, refused to appear. What, said one, do you distrust the justice of your country ? “ Not with respect to the things of
“ this life said he ; but as to life itself, I would
“ distrust my own mother, who might unwa-
“ rily throw in the black bean instead of the
“ white.” When he understood that the Athenians had condemned him to death ; “ I shall
“ let them know, said he, that I am still alive.”
Indeed they were but made too sensible of his talents. The loss of Sicily, from which they
were

were shamefully repulsed, was but a foretaste of the calamities that they experienced. The republic being quickly assailed from every quarter, confined to its own proper territory, and torn by intestine divisions, found no resource but in him whom they had proscribed. Alcibiades flew to the assistance of his fellow-citizens, and he gained several victories that at least retarded their ruin. But when, after the most brilliant success, he came among them to enjoy his glory and their gratitude, he entered the walls of Athens with fear and trembling. It was necessary, first of all, that the decree of his condemnation should be reversed. This was opposed by the Eumolpidæ, but in spite of their protestations the people ordered him to be absolved, and they desired that the sacred heralds should revoke the excommunication which, by their own express command, had been fulminated and published against him. But they could obtain from the high priest Theodorus only this reply: "I have neither excommunicated nor cursed him, if he has been guilty of no crime against the state."

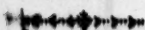
ALCIBIADES soon found an illustrious opportunity of compleat justification, and of shewing

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his

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his respect for the ceremonies he had been accused of profaning. The Lacedemonians having, for a long time, been encamped in the territory of Attica, occupied the city of Decelia, on the road from Athens to Eleufis; so that in their festivals the initiated were obliged to go by sea to the temple of Ceres, and the sacred road no longer resounded with the holy song of Jacchus. Alcibiades, in order to restore to the Mysteries their ancient dignity, and thus perform a duty, honourable to the gods and beneficial to the people, proposed to accompany the procession with his army. He was persuaded that the Lacedemonians would not venture to trouble or attack him; but if they left their camp, he resolved to give them battle; which could not fail of terminating successfully, as his soldiers would be animated by the consideration, that they were fighting in the fight of their country, in defence of its most sacred institutions. He communicated this resolution to the Eumolpidæ, and, after having taken the necessary precautions, he made the solemn assembly of the initiated begin their march, and covered them with his army, which, observing a religious silence, advanced along the road: a conduct much to be admired, adds the historian, and

and full of holy zeal ; in which Alcibiades performed the part, not only of an able and experienced General, but of High Priest and Sovereign Pontif. In returning, he led the procession in the same order to the gates of the city, while the enemy did not dare to appear.

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WE thought proper to lay the interesting circumstances of this fact before the reader, because it does not seem foreign to our subject, and may serve to illustrate the religious spirit of the Grecian people.

As the Ancients were impressed with such a high veneration for the Mysteries, we may easily conceive that they were concealed from the profane with peculiar anxiety. Two Acarnanian youths, who had strayed accidentally into the precincts of Eleufis, were massacred without pity on the spot. To divulge the Mysteries, was a crime punished by the laws with death. It was not for having said that there were no gods, nor for having made a jest of Hercules and his labours, that Diagoras was proscribed ; but because he had published the secret ceremonies of the Cabiri, or those of the mother of the gods. Having fled, a price was set on his head, and a

Punishment
of those who
divulged the
Mysteries.

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reward was promised to any one who should take him. The Athenians held him forth to the other nations as a public enemy. Their indignation was carried so far, that they persecuted the inhabitants of Melos, the native place of that Atheist. Those who, like Diogenes, escaped the vengeance of the laws, were avoided in society with that horror which the sight of a man inspires who has been guilty of an atrocious crime. His fellow-citizens renounced all intercourse with him; they would not live in the same house, nor eat at the same table with him. It was also forbidden, under severe penalties, to hearken to the secret of the Mysteries when revealed; in a word, to ask any questions that had the least relation to them was a crime.

Reflection
on the se-
cret of the
Mysteries.

BUT to what motive are these excessive precautions to be attributed? Why did so holy a religion conceal itself behind a veil? Was it, as Strabo says, because having for its object the knowledge of nature, who hides herself from observation, it might the better imitate her? Ought we not rather to seek for the cause of this concealment in the very origin of that religion, and in the spirit by which it was animated? We have seen that it was entirely found-
ed

ed on allegory. The ceremonies it had adopted were of the highest antiquity. It was of importance to preserve them, because they all had but one object; and sufficient attention could not be bestowed in maintaining them unaltered by the diversity of languages, but especially by the genius of different people. But the more they might appear strange, the more anxious were the ancients to render them respectable. Perhaps the only means of rescuing them from ridicule, and bestowing upon them the proper degree of sanctity, was to invest them with the veil of secrecy; and this secret, in all probability, consisted in nothing but in the ceremonies themselves. We must not be surprised that it was so scrupulously kept. Besides the punishment annexed to a discovery, who is he that will wantonly violate his oath, especially when it has been imposed with such pomp, and taken with such solemnity? But, besides, religion had in view to encourage the sciences, to inform the understanding, and to perfect reason. The person who was initiated justly gloried in being admitted to a participation of the great truths which she taught. He must have believed himself of a more elevated nature; and that illusion, while it flattered him by exalting his self-love,

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pendent of the

prevented him from disclosing the secret to those whom he did not think worthy of such a favour.

We must remark, moreover, that the state of perfection which seems so opposite to the weakness of our nature, is that towards which we constantly endeavour to rise. The ideal good, if we may so speak, is not less real than the ideal beauty, of which the great artists have left us models; it is equally imprinted on our minds, and is calculated to produce the same enthusiasm. In the midst of passions, by the violence of which we are hurried to evil, we lament our deviation from rectitude, and eagerly inquire after whatever can contribute to lead us back into the right path. Hence our sense of morality, and our taste for the works that inculcate it; hence the astonishing facility which some austere minds have always found in producing great revolutions when they have held themselves forth as reformers. The history of modern times furnishes us with more than one example. Hence, in a word, in the heart of the most corrupted societies, those numerous associations which have rendered themselves independent of all laws, because they subject themselves to the law of nature only,
who

who endeavour to establish every where that equality which has been every where lost; and who, forming in every nation so many separate bodies, compose but one family, spread over the whole surface of the earth, every member of which has the same end in view, the love and the practice of virtue.

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SOMETIMES the Mysteries excited the jealousy of the government. The restless eye of despotism endeavoured to penetrate the interior of these assemblies; and when they happened to fall under its displeasure, though they never shewed any thing but the love of humanity and an ardent zeal for the public good, yet calumny served as a pretext for persecution. Then were revived those gross fables which the credulous multitude have greedily caught at, always ready to attack every institution, the true motive of which it does not understand. But were not the most shameful disorders imputed even to the Christians of the Primitive Church? Forced to conceal themselves from their enemies, that is, from the state itself, they could only meet in the night, or in obscure retreats. This furnished a pretence for accusing them of crimes

False imputations on the Mysteries and secret assemblies.

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to which we refuse to give credit, although the writers of ecclesiastical history themselves have acknowledged that some abuses had really crept in among them *.

to which we refuse to give credit, although the writers of ecclesiastical history themselves have acknowledged that some abuses had really crept in among them *.

WE may well suppose, that these did not spare their persecutors that had thus calumniated them; and they principally attacked the Mysteries. "Formerly, says Clemens Alex. andrinus, the silence of night concealed the pleasures of the wise and modest with an impenetrable veil; but now Night herself divulges the debaucheries which the initiated devote to her. The light of torches declares the crimes it discovers. Extinguish these fires, O criminal Hierophanta! and thou who carriest the mysterious torch, dread to kindle these lamps; their flame will discover thy Jacchus. Allow the shades to conceal thy mysteries, and let darkness at least excuse thy orgies. The light which cannot dissemble is ready to accuse thee, and to demand vengeance."

To all these imputations of corruption and debauchery which were mutually made in theological disputes, the partisans of the opposite

* Bellarm. de Eccles. triumph. l. 3.

the sects will oppose the sensible reflection of a writer, who alone, of all these authors, has joined a philosophic mind to great erudition. "I believe, says the judicious Freret *, that there were conjunctures in which the secret and nocturnal assemblies were the occasion of disorders; but such disorders were contrary to the principles of the sect, because no religion ever existed which did not propose to inculcate a more perfect observance of the laws of morality, by conjoining religious motives with the political sanctions of these laws."

BUT what must appear singular is, that the fathers of the Church themselves had no difficulty in borrowing from them many of those ceremonies which they endeavoured to degrade. They make use of expressions entirely similar. "The usage of the Church, says S. Cyrillus, is not to discover its Mysteries to the Gentiles, especially those that concern the Father and the blessed Spirit. It is even shy of talking of them to the catechumens; on the contrary, it is almost always in obscure terms, in such a manner however, as that the believers who are instructed may comprehend, and

Form of the
Mysteries
adopted by
the first
Christians

* Acad. des Bel. Let. tom. 23. Mem. p. 253.

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 II. "By these enigmas the Dagon is overturned."
 The formula in use in the primitive Church was precisely that of the temple of Eleusis. "Depart, ye profane. Let the catechumens, "let those who are not initiated, retire." The Christians at that time called the sacraments by the name of *Mysteries*, or *Orgies*. The priest was the mystagogue, and the eucharist a true initiation *. The same silence was exacted, the same trials were to be undergone; and the secret dogmas, which were only revealed to a few, and that after certain preparations, represented the secret doctrine. Thus, the same Clemens Alexandrinus exclaims in a holy transport, "O Mysteries, truly sacred! O "pure light! At the light of torches the veil "that covers God and Heaven falls off. I am "holy, now that I am initiated. It is the "Lord himself who is the Hierophanta. He "sets his seal upon the adept, whom he illu- "minates with his beams; and whom, as a "recompense for his faith, he will recommend "to the eternal love of his Father. These are "the orgies of my Mysteries! come ye, and "be received."

THUS,

* Casaubon, exercit. ad Baron. annal. parag. 16.

Thus, the Mysteries of antiquity scarcely changed their form when Christianity became the prevailing religion. At that period the Jews also adopted them, and among these people they were the origin of the Cabala. We may affirm, that afterwards they never ceased to exist. We see them shining in great lustre through the darkness of the middle ages; and whether the traces of them were preserved in spite of the ignorance which then covered the Western World, or whether the age of chivalry brought them from the East, it is certain that our brave chevaliers acquired in that expedition those heroic virtues that have made them so celebrated, of which perhaps it would be difficult at this day to find an example, and which at least console us for the barbarism of those ages that involved the history of the human mind in impenetrable obscurity. At the revival of letters, the Mysteries acquired new lustre. They obtained an influence over the still barbarous manners, which they no doubt contributed to soften by inculcating particularly the principles of a refined morality. The ceremonies with which they are attended prove to this day from whence they drew their origin. They seem

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The fate of
the Myste-
ries.

to

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to have retained their magnificent decorations and ancient observances, only to demonstrate, that in the midst of revolutions which have swept away so many nations from the face of the earth : men, since the establishment of societies, compose but one great family. Whatever conformity there may exist between the Mysteries of the Moderns and those of the Ancients, the latter are particularly distinguished from the former in having made an essential part of religion, or rather in having constituted the religion itself.

Connection
of the My-
steries with
Philosophy.

GREECE derived another advantage from the Mysteries ; they were the source from which the finest geniuses of that nation drew the greatest part of those discoveries that have rendered them immortal. Philosophy is the object of the Mysteries, according to Strabo. We shall not affirm, that without the ceremonies of Ceres and Bacchus that important branch of human knowledge would not have flourished among those people. Liberty, of which they were idolatrously fond, could not fail, by leading them to what was great in the sciences and arts, to exercise those fine faculties which they had received from nature. Whatever had been

been the religious administration of Greece, undoubtedly the wisdom of Socrates would have excited the admiration of his compatriots; the eloquent pen of Xenophon and of Plato, would have consigned the precepts of it to posterity, and Aristotle would have astonished the world by the vast extent of his genius. But it is not less certain, that religion, being the depository of the sciences, first brought the elements of them into Greece, where they were afterwards cultivated with so much success; and we may have observed, that the Mysteries comprehended the principles, and unfolded the doctrines of a sublime philosophy.

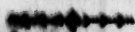
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II

ACCORDING to Proclus and Jamblichus, Pythagoras had received his notion of the metempsychosis, and that of the purification of the soul, from the hymns of Orpheus, and had learnt, to make use of his own words, *that the eternal substance of number was the intelligent mind of the universe, of heaven, of the earth, and of mixed beings.* Accordingly this philosopher adopted the greater part of the ceremonies in use in the Mysteries, such as the probation, the silence, and a number of other rigorous observances.

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observances. He announced his dogmas in obscure terms, and his disciples were prohibited from revealing his doctrine. His school having been dispersed, several sects were formed out of the wreck of it, who all adhered to the same principles differently modified. That which seemed most strictly to conform itself to those principles was the Orphic, or Bacchic sect; so named, because its followers were particularly attached to the worship of Bacchus, of which Orpheus was the founder. "They
 " subjected the *teletai*, or perfect, to the obser-
 " vation of practices enjoined to the Egyp-
 " tian priests; that is to say, that they should
 " live only on fruits and plants, and should
 " abstain from bloody sacrifices; in this re-
 " spect they formed a body separated from
 " the rest of the society, and this was what
 " they called the Orphic life*." They joined themselves afterwards to the new Platonicians, and they found means to substitute their dogmas in the room of the ancient platonism.

It would be curious to trace all these sects as they sprung from one another, and succeeded each

* Freret, Acad. des Bell. Lett. Tom. 23. Mem.

each other during the finest ages of Greece. We might observe what they had in common, what was peculiar to each, and in what they adhered to the national religion, from which they were always cautious not to deviate too openly; but as we are obliged to confine ourselves within the bounds prescribed to this work, we shall only remark, that of all the sects the Stoics retained the greatest conformity with the Mysteries. Their doctrine, so magnificently described by the greatest painter of antiquity, was precisely that which the Hierophanta unfolded to the initiated in the sanctuary of Eleusis. The Epicureans, on the contrary, who endeavoured to annihilate the gods by substituting in their stead a blind principle, were regarded as the enemies of religion. Their presence, it was imagined, would profane the sanctity of the Mysteries; and, as we have before related, they were in the number of those to whom the herald interdicted the entrance to the temple. If they were not persecuted, it was because in their writings they were careful to respect these august solemnities.

It is needless to repeat, that the Ancients, in every thing that concerned their deities, gave

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gave free scope to the imagination. The poets took advantage of this permission to adorn and embellish their ingenious fictions. We may add too, that the philosophers, although obliged to greater circumspection, because they proposed to themselves a nobler and more serious purpose, made the same use of them in their works; and as the public worship was an inexhaustible fund of description and imagery for the poets, philosophy likewise drew from the secret worship a copious store of materials for its different systems.

Recapitulation of what concerns the Mysteries.

BUT religion nevertheless maintained its dominion. We have just seen what it had done to secure its establishment, by an institution which, on all occasions, tended to confirm its authority. The Mysteries drawing, like religion, their origin from the East, passed over very early into Greece. There it was their object to inculcate the doctrine of a providence which punished guilt, and offered a recompence to virtue; to purify the manners, and to unfold the system of universal nature, or of the supreme mind of the universe. To these objects tend all the ceremonies they prescribe, the magnificence of which was particularly remarkable in the

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O C H A P.

CHAPTER III.

*Of some other religious Institutions among the
Greeks.*

Other Articles of the
ancient Religion.

AFTER having explained at some length the double worship, the one public the other secret, which composed the religion of the Greeks, we have still to treat of some other points, of less importance indeed, but necessary for the obtaining a distinct idea of that religion. The objects that now occupy our attention, are the Festivals, the Sacrifices, and what relates to the oracles, or divination. As our principal aim has been to inquire into the spirit of the religious institutions of Greece, we shall pass quickly over these different subjects, although all of them would admit of much investigation, the first especially, on which the learned have bestowed indefatigable attention and erudition,

Of the Festivals and
their origin.

ALL nations have had festivals or days consecrated to repose, and destined to the praise of the Supreme Being, in gratitude for his benefits.

fits. The first, and most solemn, were instituted by nations that had acquired the knowledge of agriculture. The labours of the field demand relaxation, and the return of harvest presents a suitable occasion for expressing the joy and transports of a lively gratitude to the author of nature. The old man who reckons his age by the number of harvests he has reaped, rejoices with his family at the return of autumn. He invites his children to sing the praises of the bountiful God that loads them with his blessings; and he himself, with a sickle in his hand, or a sheaf of corn, raises the lofty hymn. The revolutions of the heavenly bodies, which invariably lead to the same pleasures, and demand the same labours, were, in the eyes of the first husbandmen, so many interesting periods, which it was necessary to establish. They celebrated the renovation of the year, the return of the seasons, the course of the sun, and the different aspects of the moon. When religion laid hold of these objects to recommend them to public veneration, the festivals were gradually incorporated with the fables of mythology, and thus became connected with the worship of the greatest part of the gods.

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III.Their mo-
tives.

NEITHER is it difficult to discover what were the motives of their institution among the Ancients. They related to the appearance of the sun in the four principal points of the celestial sphere, and consequently to the most remarkable divisions of the year ; to the phases of the moon, which had given occasion to the distinction of months and of weeks ; and to the various operations of agriculture, such as tillage and reaping. There were still others that had a more particular reference to religion, and which had been invented for the purpose of informing men with regard to the origin of the world and the revolutions of nature. Lastly, festivals were instituted with a view to perpetuate the remembrance of some celebrated event, or in memory of those heroes that had benefited their country.

Division of
the festi-
vals.

THIS furnishes us with the means of arranging all the festivals of antiquity. We shall distinguish them into four different kinds : 1. The astronomical festivals, including the solar and lunar ; 2. The rural festivals ; 3. Those relating to theogony ; and, 4. Those intended to commemorate celebrated heroes or events. These festivals were very numerous, and were multiplied

multiplied to such a degree in Athens, says Montesquieu, "among that superior people to whom
 "all the cities of Greece submitted their differences, that there was hardly sufficient time left
 "for the common business of life." We shall not enter into the immense detail of all these festivals, but content ourselves with having indicated the order in which it appears to us that they may be arranged; and, leaving to others the care of filling up the nomenclature, we shall make choice in each class of those only that are the most remarkable, or that are most proper for shewing the spirit of the religious customs of the Greeks.

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THE most magnificent of all, and likewise the most numerous were the festivals of the Sun, who had been personified under so many different forms, and whose course it is so essential for civilized people to be acquainted with. The year was never certainly fixed among the Greeks, whence arises the confusion that reigns in their calendar. They were careful, however, to mark the principal epochs. Each season was celebrated with proper solemnity, and always with symbols relative to the arrival of the Sun, whether at the solstices or

Astronomical
 festivals.
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at the equinoxes. In the Spring, they celebrated his return, when conqueror of India he advanced, crowned with glory, from the extremities of the east: then happened the great Dionysia. The Athenians placed the feast of Hercules at the Summer solstice. At Rhodes, the inhabitants, who gave themselves out for the children of the Sun, and who had erected to his honour that stupendous Colossus which was ranked among the wonders of the world, worshipped him chiefly in autumn. In Winter, they wept his death, and were affected with the melancholy in which he seemed to have plunged all nature. Besides that Adonis of whom we have formerly spoken, who was so celebrated in all the countries of the earth, the Lacedemonians deplored the fatal lot of Hyacinthus, as an emblem of the year, which, like a tender flower, fades and loses its lustre.

BUT soon the light re-appeared, the god was again revived and his return to life was every where celebrated. Ancient nations announced it by their songs of triumph. Each person congratulated his neighbour, and presents were sent as a signal of the renovation of the year; a custom still perpetuated with us. The night
of

of the Winter solstice, which the Greeks named the *triple* night, was that which they thought gave birth to Hercules. It has become an epoch of singular importance in the eyes of the Christian, who has destined it to celebrate the birth of the Saviour, that true Sun of Justice, who alone has come to dissipate the darkness of ignorance. We may likewise still find at this day traces of many ceremonies of the same sort. The Egyptians fixed the pregnancy of Isis in the last days of March, and towards the end of December they placed the commemoration of her delivery. Some of the names that the Roman Catholic Church has inserted into her calendar about the same time of the year, still perpetuate those festivals of victory by which the course of the Sun had been represented. Thus the Ancients may be said to have accompanied that luminary in his progress. When he seemed to forsake our climates, the ceremonies were a melancholy aspect; but cries of exultation, and transports of joy, succeeded their lamentations when he again re-ascended to the superior hemisphere.

THESE successive revolutions gave occasion to innumerable allegories and usages, of which

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it is easy to perceive the motive. It was said that the reign of Jupiter was to end, and that he would commit the sceptre of the universe into the hands of Phanes. Is not this tradition a representation of the vicissitudes incident to the Sun? Phanes was the same with Dionysus, who made his first appearance under the figure of a child. In other countries, Osiris, or even Apollo, but always one of the deities that represented the Sun, was destined to succeed another of the same class. Esculapius, the divine physician of every evil, was announced in the following terms: "Why dost thou not shine, O benevolent light, for the comfort of the world! Mortals are indebted to thee for life. To thee alone it belongs to disengage the spirit from the grasp of death. In vain does Hell rage. Of a god thou shalt become a man, and of a man a god, and twice shall thy destiny be changed."

ALL the people waited for his return, and with their eyes turned towards the East they invoked him with a loud voice: they imagined that a new revolution would induce a new order of things, and make them more happy. Such delusive hope was given to Man to make

make him forget the past, and to console him under present calamities. It is chiefly when a nation groans under despotism that this sentiment, the only one it retains, unfolds itself with the greatest energy. The opinion of an avenging god has come originally from climates that seem to have been condemned to perpetual servitude. It obtained a quick reception among the Romans after they became slaves. Octavius had scarcely established, on a solid foundation, the power of the Cæsars, when Rome exclaimed, "The times foretold by the Sybil are arrived; may a new age restore that Saturn! Soon may the child be born who shall banish the age of Iron, and soon may Apollo become master of the world." Apollo is the deity that Horace, terrified with the misfortunes of his country, beseeches to come and expiate the crimes committed under the reign of Jupiter*.

In the last years of the reign of Tiberius, it was rumoured that the Phenix had come from the extremities of Asia to burn itself in the temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, and that

* Lib. 1. Od. 2.

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it was to revive from amidst its ashes. That bird, so famous for its longevity and miraculous death, had at first been the symbol of the cycles that succeed and grow out of one another. The duration of its life was fourteen hundred and sixty years. This number is precisely that of the great period of Thot. The fathers of the church afterwards proposed it as an authentic proof of the resurrection; and in the same manner were many of the emblems of antiquity applied to the new doctrines. Tacitus, when giving an account of the religious opinions of his age, found himself obliged to mention the Phenix and to relate the marvelous in its history. It is singular that he places its appearance in Egypt, under the consulship of Paulus Fabius and Lucius Vitellius in the year thirty-four, only a few months after the consummation of that great sacrifice at Jerusalem, from which begins an æra so precious to the human race. Under Vespasian, after the monstrous excesses of Caligula and of Nero, the rumour went abroad, says Tacitus, that a time would come which had been foretold in the sacred books of the priests, in which the East should be in commotion, and men from Judea should subject every thing to their dominion.

minion *. Suetonius expresses himself exactly in the same terms. It would seem, that so many nations, bending under the same yoke, relied upon that religion which afforded them a consolatory hope. It persuaded them, that from the regions in which the bright day-star arises, there should issue a conqueror commissioned by heaven to break their chains, and to deliver them from bondage.

CHAP. III.
 111.

THE Sun, as the deliverer who was to fulfil the expectation of the nations, was every where invoked with great pomp. Greece never displayed such magnificence as on those days of solemnity which were instituted in honour of the gods who represented the Sun. The Isthmian games were dedicated to Neptune. In the Pythian, the memorable victory of Apollo was celebrated. " Silence! the God approaches; prepare your concerts, and make ready the dance. Io, let all sing Io Pæan! Such was, O divine Phœbus, the first cry of the people of Delphi, when thou didst shew in their favour the power of thy arrows. Pitho, the formidable monster, Pitho, the terrible serpent darted towards thee, but thy redoubled and rapid blows soon laid him

" dead

* Hist. lib. 5. C. 13.

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"dead at thy feet. The people shouted Io, Io
"Pæan! strike; for Latona in thee has sent us
"a deliverer *." The Nemæan games were
instituted in honour of the victory which Her-
cules gained over the lion. Lastly, the Olym-
pic games, which gave rise to a famous æra,
were consecrated to Jupiter. The concourse
of people at these games may be considered
as the august assembly of the whole nation.
There, crowns were not only decreed to the
wrestlers, to those who had given proofs of su-
perior skill and address; but there too, re-
wards were bestowed on distinguished talents,
and worthy deeds: and the citizen who had
signalized himself, found, in the applause of
his compatriots, the noblest meed that his ac-
tions could receive. When Themistocles, re-
turning conqueror from Salamis, appeared at
these games, the air resounded with loud ac-
clamations. The spectacles were interrupted;
and, says a writer who knew how to estimate
heroism, "The combatants were neglected
"during a whole day, that the people might
"look at and contemplate a great man." It
was there too that Herodotus came to charm
the Greeks by the recital of their victories over

* Callimachus.

the Persians. The names of the nine muses, which were given by way of applause to the books of his history, attest the enthusiasm of the hearers, and shew how deservedly the author was celebrated,

THE worship of the Sun was connected among the Greeks with every institution. The year is formed by the revolution of that luminary round the earth. If men were long ignorant of the precise duration of that revolution, they were never mistaken with regard to the order of the seasons ; and we have just seen, that, from the very beginning, this periodical return was announced by festivals, the principal object of which was to serve as unequivocal signs to the simple husbandman. Another division of time which was early made, is that which has received the name of *Month*, and which comprehends the space included in one revolution of the Moon. Its duration may be differently measured. “ If we consider the time only “ which the Moon takes in passing through “ the zodiac to return to the same point in the “ heavens, we will find it nearly twenty-eight “ days ; and this is what is called the Periodical month : but if we consider the course of “ the

Lunar festivals.

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“ the Moon with regard to the aspect of the Sun, and in her conjunctions with him, her period is more than twenty-nine days, “ which makes the synodic month.” These two months being incommensurable with each other, it was necessary, for the purposes of society, to find a number of entire days which should most exactly contain the fourth part of a revolution of the Moon. Seven was the number fixed upon, because the period of twenty-eight days which results from it, is that which approaches nearest to the true lunar period, whether we consider the particular motion of that satellite, or its relative motion with the Sun. Such was the origin of weeks thus indicated by the different phases of the Moon; and this division is so well established in nature, that it has been universally adopted.

As the four most remarkable points in the Sun's path had been celebrated, the four parts of the month were, on the same principle, likewise destined to religious observance. Every seventh part of the weekly cycle was consecrated; and, as the learned author * from whom we have chiefly taken these remarks has observed,

* Boulanger. *L'Antiquité dévoilée.*

served, the lunar festivals had the same analogy to those of the Sun that the different phases had to the solstices and equinoxes. The Neomenia were among the Ancients an important epoch, that announced the return of a benevolent planet. The Greeks dedicated the feast of the new Moon to all the gods, and they invoked especially Diana and Apollo as the fountains of light, beseeching them to guard throughout the month the public felicity. They consecrated to the same deities the feast of the first quarter, and celebrated in their honour the Thargelia, during which the youth sung hymns and carried branches of laurel. The day on which the Moon attains her full lustre was no less solemn in their eyes; but there remain few monuments of the manner in which it was celebrated: the same is to be said with regard to the feast of the last quarter, which is also little known. We only know that the Olympic games began on the day of the full Moon; and that it was considered as a happy day, especially by the Lacedaemonians, who never betook themselves to the country before the fifteenth day of the month. For it must be observed, that the superstition which assigns a happy or unfortunate

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nate influence to particular days as well as to particular numbers, is of a very early origin; and it would seem to be a malady of which the human mind can never perfectly cure itself, even among people who think themselves the most enlightened. "Thus, adds M. Boulanger, at the return of each period, they praised or blessed the God who preserves the universe; and that primitive simplicity which had fixed the number, the order, and the dignity of the festivals by the return of the lunar and solar phases, has certainly some thing great and sublime."

Rural
festivals.

AMONG those that related to agriculture, the Saturnalia, which had long been established in Greece, were particularly remarkable. Before they were introduced at Rome, where they acquired new lustre, they had been celebrated at Athens under the name of *Chronia*; and in the beautiful valley of Tempe, so famous for the luxuriance of its productions, under that of *Peloria*. It was the particular character of the Saturnalia, that they inculcated the idea of primæval equality. Humanity, so often insulted among the Ancients, at these feasts resumed her rights, at least for a time.

time. Masters and slaves eat together at the same table. Every thing tended to recall the memory of that happy age, in which there existed no distinction of ranks, and in which the husbandmen, sharing the same toils, and partaking of the same pleasures, followed no laws but those of natural equity.

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THE Ambarvale was intended to propitiate Ceres, and to demand of her a plentiful harvest. Towards the end of Spring, processions were made round the fields when they are covered with the growing corn; and the priests, crowned with branches, danced and sung in honour of the goddess of fruitful seasons. As agriculture was one of the objects of Religion, it may well be imagined that she omitted nothing that could contribute to its success, and that she had therefore consecrated its various operations by different solemnities. She was not less attentive to mark the grand epochs of the dispersion of chaos, and of the revolutions that had happened to the face of the earth.

THE roamings of Latona, while she sought an asylum in vain over the whole universe;

P

her

Festivals
relating to
Theogony.

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her retreat upon the shore of an island in the middle of the sea; her piercing cries when, loosening her girdle, and leaning her back to the trunk of a palm-tree, she experienced the throes of child-birth, were so many symbols that related to the creation of the world. In order to represent the harmony of the celestial spheres, it was said that the swans of Mæonia, assembling on the banks of the Pactolus, had seven times saluted her with their harmonious notes. Delos alone presented itself to the goddess, while every other resting-place seemed to fly from before her. Delos, which formerly like a star had been darted from the sky, then ceased to be driven at the mercy of the waves. It was called the Most Sacred of Islands, the Nurse of Apollo. Neither Bellona, nor death, nor the horrors of war, had ever dared to approach its happy shores. But the nations around made annual offerings of their first fruits and tenths to Latona. From the rising of the Sun to the western ocean, from the burning regions of the south to the inhospitable Hyperborean climes, she was uniformly revered. The Athenians in particular instituted a brilliant festival in her honour. A vessel, richly adorned, carried thither the solemn

lemn embassy in great pomp; and while the troop of Theorizæ repeated the hymn which the old man of Lycia, the divine Olen, had brought from the banks of the Xanthus, the young maids beat the ground with measured step. "Hail! O Delos, cried the general voice, thou that risest majestic above the waves! the Cyclades form a dance around thee. Hail, thou Queen of Islands! Hail, O Phebus! Hail, O daughter of Latona!" While this festival continued, no sentence of death could be carried into execution; and Socrates, already condemned, remained in prison till the sacred vessel returned. The Delia were celebrated in the month Thargellon, which answers to our May. The birth of nature was celebrated in the season when every thing is renewed. The impetuous winds of Winter were hushed, Spring alone was triumphant, when the stars first shot their beams across the sky, and the different tribes of animals received the benefit of the light.

THE eternal wisdom which had presided at the formation of all things was likewise invoked. Minerva, the tutelary deity of the Athenians,

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nians, came in person to honour the solemnity, and her statue on that day was carried in procession, under a canopy, through the city.

HER invincible arm had overpowered the audacious children of the earth. The object of the Panathenean festival was the memory of this celebrated victory. The peplus, or magnificent veil of the goddess, was carried in triumph. The history of the war with the giants, and of their defeat, was here embroidered by the hands of young virgins consecrated to her worship. This veil was then attached to a vessel which was made to move on the ground. The great Panathenæa consisted in processions and various games. Rewards were distributed to the victors in the chariot race, in gymnastic exercises, and in music. These were followed by the pyrrhic, or military dances, which were performed by the youths in compleat armour, because in this manner Minerva had danced after her triumph over the impious Titans; and this tradition proves, that the ancient revolutions of the universe were the principal objects of attention.

THE Hydrophoriæ were likewise a commemoration

moration of the deluge. The people of Athens went annually to pour water into an aperture situated near the temple of Jupiter Olympus, out of which they thought the deluge had issued which inundated Attica. There were several other festivals of this kind in various provinces of Greece; those in particular that had been the scene of the local inundations in the times of Deucallion, or of Ogyges. Here they appeased the infernal gods with prayers and sacrifices.

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THE same divinities presided over the festivals instituted in honour of the dead. In the fabulous ages of antiquity, the heroes were called by the name of Demi-gods; and sometimes simple funeral honours became a sort of worship. We must not imagine, however, that any adoration was ever paid to them. Greece, proud of her independence, knew nothing of an apotheosis; nor ever, while she retained her freedom, did she bow the knee before altars erected to men. But she loaded with honourable distinctions those who had shed their blood in her defence. It was thus that she consecrated the memory of those brave soldiers who had conquered at Platea three

Comme-
morative
feasts.

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hundred thousand barbarians : and an annual festival was celebrated on the spot that had been the theatre of their glory. No slave assisted at it, because the heroes had fallen victims to their love of liberty. The citizens repaired in solemn pomp to the foot of the monument that had been erected to them, and having invoked their manes, the Archon took the cup full of wine, and cried aloud, “ I
“ drink to those who have died for their coun-
“ try.”

AMONG a people sensible to the power of eloquence, and who knew well how to excite emulation, the custom of pronouncing funeral orations on their warriors was soon introduced. These orations were not made only on chiefs and generals, and men who have often no other merit than that of being elevated by their birth above their equals ; they celebrated the whole army of the defenders of the state ; they praised their valour and intrepidity. The orator being stationed at the tomb of the deceased hero, addressed himself to his parents : “ I do
“ not attempt to console you, said he, have not
“ your children fallen with glory ? Would not
“ you, like them, prefer an honourable death
“ to

"to an obscure, or ignominious life!" then turning to the brothers and children, he said, "A glorious course lies before you. You have the example of your fathers and your brothers, but do not flatter yourselves that you can easily attain renown like theirs. While a man is living he has rivals, and the hatred that attends him is unceasingly employed to rob him of his fame; but justice is always done to the man who is no more: death alone can banish envy, and establish the fame of those whose lives have been useful." Thus spoke the celebrated Pericles, when from the tribunal of Athens he pronounced the eulogium of those who had perished in the war of Samos. We must necessarily confess, that most of the institutions of that people had an air of grandeur unknown to our modern states; and the religion with which they were connected, contributed to render them still more august.

WE have just shewn the nature of the festivals. In order to have a general view of them, and to comprise them all in one sketch, we may join to these four sorts, the Astronomical, Rural, Theogonic, and Commemorative; those

Of some particularities with regard to the feasts.

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which have already been the object of our inquiry when we were treating of the ceremonies of initiation, and which consequently we may call *Mysterious Festivals*. But we must observe with care the circumstances by which they are distinguished. These last had an intimate connection with the secret worship, and made an essential part of it. In the others, on the contrary, Religion did not refuse to unveil herself to every eye. Thus the hymns that were sung at these two feasts were of a very opposite nature. We have seen that those of Orpheus were solely designed for the *Mysteries*. The other hymns that have been transmitted to us, seem to relate only to the public worship. The adventures they contain, that multitude of fables and fictions which are the subject of them, seem founded on the popular traditions: and it is easy to perceive in them that species of theology which the Poets had adopted. These hymns are full of agreeable descriptions; sometimes they abound in elevated thoughts and bold imagery. We have still the works of this kind that were composed by Callimachus, who lived at the court of the Ptolemys; and some still more ancient, as they bear the name of Homer. Besides the hymns
of

of Pindar, which no doubt breathed the same enthusiasm with his other works, time has bereaved us of those of Anthes, of Olen the Ly-
cian, of Stesichorus, of Archilochus, of Simonides, and of some other Grecian Poets. Among the Latins, several odes of Horace, and especially the secular poem, are true hymns. This is also the case with that beautiful invocation to Hercules in the eighth book of the *Æneid*; and we must not forget the poem attributed to Catullus, which was sung at the vigils of Venus *.

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IN the midst of the great solemnities, these hymns were repeated with a loud voice, by numerous choirs of youths and virgins carrying the sacred baskets. The festivals of the Ancients displayed a spectacle of extraordinary magnificence, being accompanied with all the pomp of ceremonies, with dances, with games, and exercises of every kind. They were also attended with a circumstance of particular merit, that of suspending the fury of war. In those that concerned the whole nation, from the instant that the herald announced them to the different cities of Greece, the warriors laid down

• Pervigilium Veneris.

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down their arms ; and it was forbidden, under the severest penalties, to infringe the sacred truce : an institution ~~very~~ useful in a republic of warriors, always eager to deprive their rivals of that liberty which they were so anxious to preserve within their own precincts. In like manner, the fierce nations of Germany adopted, in the midst of their forests, this method of suspending the rancorous maxima which incited the different tribes to incessant hostilities : and among us, when Europe, overspread with fortresses, exhibited on all hands the image of war, the truce of God, which the Vassals were obliged to respect, procured to the unhappy subjects a few intervals of tranquillity and peace.

Sacrifices.

Thus did that religion, sometimes at least, contribute to the good of the people. We may be assured, that while she civilized the Greeks, she brought them back to the sentiments of humanity. Cruel and fierce at first, like other savages, they offered human victims to their gods. It is true that their choice generally fell upon prisoners taken in war, such as the Trojans who were sacrificed to the ghost of Achilles. But that horrid custom ceased as soon

as they became civilized. The celebrated sacrifice of Iphigenia, which Lucretius so boldly accuses religion of having caused, is an event which belongs to the heroic ages, that is, to the time in which the Greeks were still barbarous, as we learn from the Iliad and Odyssey. For, after the establishment of the republics, we do not find that the Greeks followed the example of those nations by whom they were surrounded, who seemed insensible to the voice of Nature. The finest treaty of peace which has ever been consigned to the records of history is due to a Greek. Gelon having subdued the Carthaginians, exacted from them, as the only condition on which he agreed to a truce, that they should cease to sacrifice their women and children to Saturn. If there were still a nation in Europe that retained the more atrocious custom of an auto-da-fe, it would be meritorious in the other powers to join in constraining that nation, by force of arms, to abolish the barbarous practice. No war could be undertaken for a more just, or more respectable purpose.

In the happy countries of Greece, the pious contented themselves with sacrificing the blood
of

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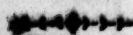
of animals. The first victims were those that with merciless rage had devoured the innocent inhabitants of the plains. The goat bled on the altars of Bacchus, because it had not respected the shoots of the vine. In like manner, the sow was at first employed as an expiation to Ceres; and such was the original motive of sacrifices; but soon the ox himself, and the innocent sheep, were not spared. It must be confessed, that our peaceful ceremonies seem preferable to those of the Ancients. Notwithstanding the perfumes that they were careful to disperse, notwithstanding the garlands of flowers with which the victims were crowned, the sight of these animals, their groans while expiring under the sacred knife, their blood which ran in streams on the pavement of the temples; these images of death and destruction must have inspired a degree of horror, and seem unworthy of the adoration paid to the Supreme Being.

Divination.

OUR religion has not adopted these sanguinary sacrifices: it has, moreover, left antiquity in possession of the art of deceiving by divination. We have not however risen superior to those prejudices which seem to cleave to human

human nature : we have at all times attempted, and even at the present endeavour to penetrate into futurity ; but christianity has uniformly discountenanced all those means which a vain and ridiculous curiosity has employed for these purposes ; while, on the contrary, among the Ancients, predictions of every kind, and in general all that could gratify the credulity of the people, made a part of the public worship. They defined divination to be a presentiment and fore-knowledge of future events ; and they exalted it into an art subjected to rules and principles. It is impossible to justify them in this, for there can be no excuse for error ; but if we should undertake to account for these superstitious practices, we might discover the origin of them in the very genius of their religion, which was intimately connected with astronomy ; and accordingly the founders of it had been diligent in observing the principal phenomena of the heavenly bodies. It was one of the religious tenets, that all bodies are moved by intelligences which preside over the general harmony ; and this system considerably favoured the opinion of a sidereal influence on human affairs ; an idea which has been adopted in every age, because

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man is ever prone to compare himself with the grandest objects of nature, and has always been willing to believe that heaven takes a particular interest in his preservation. Besides, from their propensity to allegorical representation, or rather from their abuse of it, the Greeks had insensibly personified every being, even those that seemed least intitled to such attention, and people were in a manner surrounded with deities: the most common event was considered as a sign by which they made manifest their interference. From that period, the flight of birds, the noise of thunder, the state of the entrails of a victim, words pronounced by chance and without design, in a word, the most trifling circumstance acquired a degree of importance, and seemed the voice of the deity himself, audibly exerted.

**Origin of
oracles.**

AT first, some fanatics believed themselves inspired; others, more craftily took advantage of the general belief in spirits; and immediately, from every quarter, there arose sacred interpreters, who expounded dreams and predicted the future; and these had the art of attracting the multitude, who are always greedy of prodigies. Their common abode was in
caves,

caves, in obscure dens, where every thing conspired to foster superstition : these retreats were chosen, either because in certain places the vapours that exhale from the earth really produce that sort of intoxication and delirium, so necessary to those who pretend to inspiration, or because, in order to conceal their secret practices, they made choice of those retreats which were impervious to the light of day, and in which the voice acquired something supernatural by being reverberated from the hollow rocks. At last these rude and savage places became magnificent abodes, to which the chiefs of the people approached with reverential awe ; and instead of a simple herdsman, there appeared a priestess, venerable from her dignified air and age, who seated herself with profound solemnity on a sacred tripod.

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THE number of those interpreters of the will of the gods multiplied with the credulity and the wants of the people. But those alone attracted the public confidence and veneration who resided in the temples, and the god himself spoke by their mouth. Such was the origin of the oracles, so famous in Greece. That of Dodona was the first known ; it was always one of the

Oracle of
Dodona,

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the most revered, and that precisely in proportion to its antiquity. The Pelasgi consecrated the tree from the fruit of which they had obtained a gross food. The forests of Thessaly were at once the object and the seat of their worship. At the arrival of the Oriental colonies they transported their god into Epirus, into the kingdom of the Molossi, and it was there that Dodona acquired such celebrity. During the most prosperous ages of Greece, the people, always attached to the religion of their ancestors, went to consult those venerable oaks; and, not unfrequently, the chance of peace or war depended on the manner in which their branches were agitated by the wind. The oracle was likewise made known by the noise of some vases that were suspended among the trees, or by the cooing of doves that were suffered to harbour within the sacred precincts. It was by the nature, or variety of these different sounds, that the sacred interpreters regulated their responses, which always began with these words, "Attend to the decrees of Jupiter."

The office of interpreter intrusted to women.

THE office of interpreter was intrusted to women; and indeed in all countries, wherever inspirations or prodigies are to be attempted,

or extraordinary means employed, recourse is always had to the softer sex, who, by the extreme sensibility of their organs, are most susceptible of enthusiasm. The Germans and ancient Scandinavians had priestesses who accompanied them in all their expeditions, marching at their head to the field of battle, inspiring the courage of the warriors by assuring them of victory, or by promising them a glorious reward if they died in the cause of liberty. It has been observed, that almost in every country of Europe the people have been converted to christianity by Queens. And among the most enlightened people, in those moments of effervescence, when opinions are established that are founded on miracles, the illusion always begins with the women, and by women it is perpetuated. Those miracles generally confound the senses by counteracting the established laws of nature; yet for that very reason they are received with extreme avidity, till at last reason and experience assign them their place in the numerous class of errors. We must not therefore be surprised, if women were employed by the Ancients to predict the future.

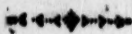
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In describing the nature of the impressions
Q which

The Pythia;

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which the priestess of the temple of Apollo Pythian received, some ecclesiastical writers have attributed the kind of frenzy that she was seized with to a particular cause which modesty does not permit us to mention *. But without having recourse to exhalations rising from the earth, which might act forcibly on certain organs, it seems to us that fanaticism was alone able to operate the phenomenon. Why search for another agent, when we know the power of imagination? Such was its effect on the Pythia, that she seemed really animated by a supernatural spirit. As soon as she began to cry, "Behold the god, the god approaches! her features, her colour, and her countenance are no longer the same. Her hairs stand erect, and she seems no longer mortal, A prey to the most impetuous emotions, she yields

* Orig. contra Cels. l. 7.

"Dicitur Pythia insidere tripodi Appollinis, ac quidem
"cruribus apertis; sicque malignum spiritum inferne in
"corpus ejus penetrantem ipsam implere furore." S.
Chrysost. homel. 20.

The ancient Scholiast on Aristophanes says likewise, when speaking of this priestess, "insidens tripodi divari-
"catis cruribus malignum vaporem recipit per genitalia,
"et impletur furore."

“ yields to the god who overpowers her, and
 “ whom she attempts in vain to escape. Her
 “ wild eye is directed to heaven. The violent
 “ heavings of her bosom resemble the billows
 “ which fall with a deep and hollow murmur,
 “ when the angry Boreas agitates the waters of
 “ the ocean. At last she utters the sacred
 “ words. But as soon as she is abandoned by
 “ that celestial light which informed her of
 “ the fate of the world, and is guided only by
 “ the feeble gleam that directs the rest of man-
 “ kind, she is immediately involved in dark-
 “ ness. Apollo commands Oblivion to take
 “ possession of her faculties, and to efface from
 “ her mind the knowledge of the future. Truth,
 “ now banished from her bosom, retires to
 “ the tripods,” till the time when she again
 vouchsafes to communicate ; for at Delphi she
 gave oracles but once in a year.

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THE oracle of that city was the most cele-
 brated of all antiquity. On the rocks of mount
 Parnassus stood a magnificent temple, enriched
 with a multitude of offerings, which supersti-
 tion had deposited at its shrine. It was consi-
 dered as situated in the centre of the earth, be-
 cause the divinity that resided there occupies

Oracle at

Delphi.

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the centre of the world. At first it was but a rustic cottage, formed of branches of laurel. To that simple edifice, such as was suited to the rudeness of the first ages, there succeeded another, constructed in a more marvellous manner. This, as it was said, had been fabricated by bees, those industrious artists which, according to the ancient theology, were endowed with a divine soul, and participated of the universal mind that pervades all matter. At last the Amphyctions employed the most able artists to build, in honour of Apollo, a temple which should be worthy of the majesty of that god, and of the veneration of the people,

Causes of
the credit
given to
oracles.

THERE the most important affairs were decided. What colony, says Cicero, did the Greeks ever send to Sicily, to Italy, or into Asia Minor? What war did they ever undertake, without having consulted the gods of Dodona, or Delphi? The chiefs and principal magistrates were careful to maintain this confidence in the oracle, and more than once indeed did they abuse it. Lyfander, profiting by the credulity of his fellow-citizens, was on the point of enslaving his country. Philip, more fortunate, and who, besides, had more powerful

ful resources, took this method of forging fetters for Greece. The Pythia herself was accused of having allowed herself to be corrupted by the gold of that prince. It was not in this way that Alexander proceeded. Having gone to consult the priestess, while he meditated the conquest of the world, and she having refused to answer, under pretence that she did not find the inspiring influence of the god, he carried her to the tripod by force. "*O my son! said she, nothing can withstand thee:*" and these words, the natural expression of impatience at the violence offered to her, were sufficient for the young hero: he considered them as the happy preface of that success that was to crown his enterprise.

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THE oracles therefore served as a political instrument in the hands of the designing priestesses, which she sometimes employed to satisfy the views of ambition, but which she often directed to the general good. It was perhaps the most efficacious means of uniting against the common enemy so many nations, whom an opposition of interests kept in perpetual discord; as we have since seen the states of christendom assemble at once, and march against

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infidels at the command of a minister of religion calling himself a Prophet. Innumerable armies of Persians and Barbarians threatened the ruin of the only country of the universe where liberty was established: but the gods watched over its security, and inspired the Greeks with that noble boldness which rendered them invincible at Salamis, and in the plains of Marathon and Platea.

Reason
of their
silence.

No sooner did these republics disappear than the oracles ceased; and the period of that silence, for which so many absurd reasons have been given, is precisely that in which Rome became the peaceful mistress of the world. The interior provinces were secure from invasion. Peace and slavery secured their tranquillity. No advantage was to be reaped by deceiving the multitude, who were chained down by the strictest laws, and from whom a passive obedience was exacted. What need had slaves of consulting the gods, who could not promise them a happier prospect? The future could not differ from the present, at least not for a long time; and even when time actually did bring about revolutions which it was impossible to foresee, the people, since they could

could not revive oracles that had been forgotten for ages, had recourse to predictions formerly believed, and which still remained on record.

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SOME of these foretold a deliverer: and it was thought that they were about to be accomplished. It is remarkable that the books of the Sybils acquired great authority when the Roman empire became a prey to the invasions of the Northern Conquerors. Predictions, which we have already said had a reference to the ancient spirit of religion, were applied to the destruction of that immense Colossus.

Another
means of
knowing
the future.

INDEED the Sybil, according to the Eastern language, was the virgin who appears in the signs of the zodiac bearing a sheaf of corn : and it was probable, in consequence of the belief in judicial astrology, that the name was given to all women who pretended to foretell future events, and who perhaps originally confined themselves to the announcing of the period of harvest. The Ancients enumerated many of these ; among others, the Sybil of Cuma, and another of Erythrea in Ionia. The common opinion was, that each of them lived a thousand years ;

Sybile,

 Q_4

this

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this might probably, as M. Boulanger conjectures, signify an astronomical period which may have given rise to the sect of Millenarians. Our literati have not been niggard of their researches into the age and number of the Sybills. Some enumerate ten. Petit admits only one* : and he maintains, that, if one appeared at the same time in different places, the devil must have transported her continually from one country to another ; for they all agree in this, that she was inspired by the evil spirit. The Sybilline books which remain are obviously spurious, and there is no doubt but that they were the manufacture of the Christians in the first age. They are, however, very curious ; as the author, whoever he was, has certainly preserved many traditions, and the original manner of the first Sybils.

Collections
of the Pre-
dictions.

THERE existed likewise in antiquity other similar collections, such as those of Bacis the Beotian, and those of the celebrated Musæus, who had been instructed by Orpheus himself. These were occasionally consulted ; and as they contained answers always ready for every question,

* Petri Petiti de Sybilla libri tres. Lips. 1686.

tion, they had this advantage over the oracles, which uttered responses only at certain times.

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THE evocation of the dead was another way of knowing future events practised by almost every people. Saul, with the assistance of the witch of Endor, raised Samuel from his grave : Ulysses too, guided by the counsels of Circe, called forth the shade of the prophet Tiresias : and these two princes acted from the same motive, the desire of knowing the fate that was reserved for them.

Evocations
of the dead,

It was thought likewise, that the dying were endowed with a prophetic spirit, as if, when on the point of being disengaged from matter, they already participated of that divine essence to which they were going to be united. Homer makes Hector announce the speedy fate of his barbarous conqueror ; and Calanus, on the funeral pile, predicts that of Alexander *. The history of the middle ages, which also were often disfigured with prodigies and miracles, represents to us the grand master of the Templars summoning his cruel murderers, the Pope and Philip the Fair, to appear before the

Predictions
of the dy-
ing.

* Cicero de Divinatione, lib. 1.

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CHAPTER III. the tribunal of the Supreme Judge; and it adds, that both of them died at the time he had predicted *.

Difference of opinions in Ancient and Mo- dern times.

Thus, every age affords examples of superstition. It would seem, however, that human reason has been much improved since the revival of letters. In truth, our writers continue for the most part attached to ancient fables; but they reject all the facts of modern times that are inconsistent with the laws of nature. Credulity no longer exists but among individuals. Though it may still actuate some particular societies, it never affects the great interests of the state. Nations no longer tremble at the aspect of those phenomena in nature which often in former times disconcerted the most important designs. An eclipse of the moon hindered Nicias from taking advantage of the only favourable moment for his retreat; it occasioned his shameful death, and all the disasters of the Athenians in Sicily. The brave Pelopidas, abandoned by his troops in a similar circumstance, was obliged, with only three hundred men, to march against the enemy at Cynocephalus, where he was killed. The Lacedæmonians.

* Vertot, Hist. de Malthe, liv. 4.

cedemonians, by not daring to take the field before the full moon, were deprived of the glory of contributing to the common safety of Greece in the plains of Marathon. It would be easy to detail a crowd of similar cases, but happily the annals of modern times will not transmit any such to posterity. The laws of nature, now better known, have dispelled the fears of the people at the appearance of comets and meteors. The rain-bow, which the Greeks considered as a signal of the friendship that existed between man and the Deity, and which the Scandinavians believed to be a giant's bridge, is now known by every body to be the natural effect of the refractions of the rays of light in the clouds. Those voices no longer are heard, that in the silence of night came suddenly to announce impending calamities. There are now no longer any animals that speak, showers of blood, or armies encountering in the air; and the birth of monsters affords only an opportunity to the observer, of studying and admiring the handywork of Nature, even in her wanderings.

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BUT among the Ancients every event proclaimed the will of the gods: and the manner
of

Augury.

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of interpreting its different expressions constituted the learning of the Augurs. These were generally chosen from among the number of the most respectable citizens: and one of them * has told us, that they could not help smiling at the credulity of the people when they met among themselves; but in public they were obliged to perform their functions with counterfeited gravity: and such is every where the fate of the wise and enlightened, that they are forced to respect prejudices, to submit themselves to the opinions of others, and to bow the knee, as Epicurus himself did, before the objects which the multitude revere.

Other super-
stitions.

We shall not undertake to enumerate all the superstitious practices of antiquity, such as presages drawn from the flight of birds and from the interpretation of dreams: we shall not speak of the importance attributed to certain numbers, nor of a multitude of different ceremonies. Neither shall we discourse of the worship paid to animals or to fountains, sometimes even to stones of particular shape. As our intention was only to exhibit a general picture of the Religion of the Greeks, it

* Cicero.

is sufficient, in order to finish it, that we have given an idea of their sumptuous festivals, which we have divided into four different kinds; of the sacrifices with which they were accompanied; and of the principal branches of divination, such as the different sorts of oracles, as well as the other means employed in order to obtain a knowledge of future events.

AFTER having successively examined all the parts of that religion, it only remains that we endeavour to discover what influence it had on the nations whose worship is the object of our investigation.

CHAPTER III.

Recapitulation of the subject treated of above.

C H A P.

CHAPTER IV.

*Reflections on the Influence of Religion among the
Greeks.*

The difficulty of determining this influence.

THE imperfection of our information, and not the nature of the subject, will prevent us from treating this important matter with all the fullness of which it is susceptible. To do it justice, we ought to be intimately acquainted with every thing that concerns the Ancients, and to have studied with care the history of their manners, their laws, and opinions; we should be possessed of that acuteness of observation which penetrates the character of nations, which perceives the various impulses to which they are obedient, and which, in the midst of that multitude of interests and passions of every kind with which they are perpetually agitated, discerns the true causes and hidden motives of events. We feel but too sensibly how far this attempt is beyond our feeble powers. Obligated to confine ourselves within still more narrow limits, we shall endeavour at least to exhibit some results, and to sketch

out

out the plan, which cannot be executed but by an abler hand. **CHAPTER IV.**

In order to judge of the influence of religion, we must consider her as she regards society, that is, we must examine in what manner she is connected with legislation, with political economy, with morals, and the national character. If it were possible for us to obtain a perfect knowledge of these four different relations among the Ancients, by ascertaining the exertions of religion for their glory and happiness, we should be in a condition to determine precisely the influence it had over them.

Manner of viewing religion with respect to society.

In the first place, then it is not to be doubted but that in the republics of Greece, religion served as the basis of every system of laws. The laws, as we have already observed, had a sacred origin. As they were derived from the Deity himself, their establishment was among the number of the principal objects to which the veneration of the public was directed. Thus, the first chiefs who had rescued their compatriots from barbarism, called themselves the Offspring of the Gods. At that time, when the son of Apollo collected the tribes that were scattered

Connection of the Ancient Religion.
1. With Legislation.

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IV.

scattered over the mountains of Thrace, Minos, sprung from Jupiter himself, dictated to Crete his celebrated laws, which were the original of those of Lacedemon, and of which those of Plato were an improvement. The legislators who afterwards appeared have always had recourse to the intervention of Heaven, and they have always proclaimed themselves Interpreters of the Divine Will. Lyeurgus and Solon, that they might change the institutions of their country, procured the authority of the oracle for that purpose. Besides, as one of our best writers remarks, "The legislator being unable
" to employ either force or argument, had re-
" course from necessity to an authority of a
" superior kind, which might compel without
" violence, and persuade without conviction;
" he put into the mouths of his immortal per-
" sonages, the decisions of that sublime reason
" which soars above the comprehension of
" vulgar minds *."

ALTHOUGH the legislators of Greece were exempt from the errors of superstition, and knew well that a worship purely spiritual is not made for the generality of men; that it is ne-
cessary

* Rousseau Social contract.

cessary to attract the people by the splendour of rites and ceremonies, and the pomp of outward show; that they would soon acknowledge no restraint if they were not often assembled in the temples and put in mind of their duty; in a word, that religion, of some sort, is absolutely necessary for them. They took advantage therefore of that which had been introduced by the Eastern colonies. But as they meant their religion for free citizens, they began by divesting the system they adopted of that theocratical spirit which in its native place had made men slaves; and setting aside its legendary traditions, the fictions of Poets, and the vain ornaments with which it was loaded, they attached themselves chiefly to that part of religion which tended to inspire the love of virtue, and which elevated the soul to the knowledge of a Supreme Being. We have had occasion to observe with what respect Plato and Cicero speak of the Mysteries. The doctrine there inculcated was that which they have described in those beautiful works* in which they exhibit models for legislation; it was that which Charondas and Zaleucus had adopted.

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* De Legibus.

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THE preamble to the laws of this last still exists. After having established as a certain truth that there are gods, after having brought in proof of their existence this universe, which could not have been the work of blind chance, he recommends to the Locrians to do homage to the Deity, not by pompous sacrifices, nor by vain ceremonies, but by approaching him with a pure and upright heart. "For God, says he, does not accept the worship of the wicked. Virtue alone is the homage that he requires." Afterwards he exhorts them to the practice of beneficence; to prefer honour to the advantages of fortune; and to be regardless of the loss of riches, if they cannot be preserved without infamy or shame. As to those whose hearts are inclined to evil, and who are impelled by the violence of their passions to commit enormities, he sets before their eyes the fear of an offended Deity; he threatens them with his vengeance at the inevitable hour of death; when every one shall be judged according to his deeds, and when the guilty, torn by the cruel agonies of remorse, shall make vain and fruitless vows. "Let this dreadful moment, adds he, be forever present to your mind. Thus shall you tread

" tread with a firm step on the road of justice.
 " But if there is among you any one who can-
 " not resist the solicitations of the tempter, let
 " him implore the assistance of the gods, let
 " him fly for refuge to the temples as to the
 " surest asylum. There, men habituated in
 " the constant practice of probity and virtue,
 " will condescend to be his guide, they will
 " inform him of the punishments that await
 " the wicked, and of the happiness reserved
 " for the just; and their wise instructions shall
 " confirm his soul in virtue."

Thus Religion lent her aid to the laws, the
 one serving as an assistant to the other, while
 they acted in concert for the formation of
 good citizens. Is it to this fortunate co-oper-
 ation that the flourishing state of those famous
 republics is owing which we propose to our-
 selves as models? Shall we say that they drew
 their strength equally from these two circum-
 stances united? No, we must rather attribute
 the honour of the reputation they have ob-
 tained solely to the civil institutions; to those
 laws of which the great Montesquieu * gives

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* *Esprit des loix*, l. 4, c. 6.

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IV.



us so high an idea, when, after having said that it was by them that Crete and Laconia were governed, he adds, "Lacedæmon was the last that yielded to the Macedonians, and " Crete was the last conquest of the Romans : " The same institutions were established among " the Samnites, and they afforded to the Ro- " mans the occasion of four and twenty tri- " umpha."

a. With po-
litical or-
der.

BUT if we cannot affirm that policy made Religion subservient to its views, it was at least able to retain her within due bounds; and this is its chief work among the Ancients. Bayle, when speaking of the influence of the church in the middle ages, calls Religion the *primum mobile* in all revolutions; he accuses her of having instigated subjects to revolt, and of having been the cause of intestine discords and foreign wars. According to him, she took so much concern in temporal affairs that she became as it were the *soul* of them, like the actuating mind of the stoics. In fine, continues he, we may say to her as the Roman Consul formerly said to the barbarous Catiline*, "No enormity has happened, but has had thee

* Cicero in Catilinam 1.

" thee for its author ; not a crime has been per-
 " petrated without thee : the murder of so many
 " of our citizens, the oppression and plunder of
 " our allies, has through thee alone escaped pu-
 " nishment, and been exercised with unrestrain-
 " ed violence : thou hast found means not only
 " to trample upon law and justice, but even to
 " subvert and destroy them." We are far from
 adopting these reflections of a mind enlightened
 indeed, but irritated, and justly so, by the
 persecution which then afflicted the finest coun-
 tries of Europe, and of which he himself had
 been the victim. It is sufficiently certain that
 religion served only as a pretext for the ambi-
 tious ; but we do her wrong if we impute to her
 all the evils that have vexed the human race
 in modern times. We are convinced that the
 Spaniards had no occasion for the signal given
 them by the ferocious Valverde to overthrow
 the unhappy Atabalipa from his throne ; and
 are satisfied, that they sacrificed so many mil-
 lions of men only to gratify their insatiable
 avarice. We know that the gospel never com-
 manded the massacre of St Bartholomew, nor
 that of the protestants in Ireland, the barba-
 rous expeditions of the Cevennes, the assassina-
 tion of Kings, nor all those horrors that blot

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the pages of our calendar. But it is equally true, that the Ancients were destitute of a similar pretext: that this powerful motive, which has produced so many crimes among us, made no part of the spirit of their constitution, and that they never employed the terrible weapon of fanaticism. For a long time there is no instance of a war undertaken on account of religion. That of the Phœceans was begun with a different view, although it was known by the name of a Sacred war. Its object was not to subdue infidels, but to punish a sacrilegious people, that had dared to invade the territory consecrated to the god revered at Delphi. To what must we attribute that profound peace, that happy tranquillity which suffered no interruption? We will not accuse religion of indifference, as has so often been done. We are obliged to confess that she became intolerant, and even unmeasurably severe, when her sacred dogmas were attacked. But her dominion was incorporated with that of the government, and all the members of the state, being united among themselves, formed that political unity which in our days can never be attained.

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THE establishment of Christianity introduced a new language: a disruption, till then unknown, of the spiritual from the temporal power, and a clashing of jurisdictions was the result which occasioned numberless wars and disorders. Anciently the priesthood was a civil function intrusted to the ordinary citizen, and certain honourable distinctions were annexed to it; but only those indeed were chosen to perform it who were best intitled by their services or their dignity. Xenophon, an historian, philosopher, and able general, was performing the office of priest, when he was told of the loss of his son killed at the battle of Mantinea. The chief men of the state went in person to the temples, and paid their own vows to the deities of their country. Happy nations! where the same person that invoked the gods could address an oration to the people: where the same hand that shed the blood of a victim could gather laurels in the field of battle! The priests, as they did not form a separate body in the state, had no interest in fomenting divisions to trouble its peace. The citizens of every order were unanimous in the love of their country and in its defence, and

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3. With
morals.

the emulation that reigned among them contributed to promote the general good.

To this noble emulation we are indebted for the precious examples they have left us. What exalted characters were those of Ariftides, of Cimon, of Phocion, of Epaminondas; and that crowd of heroes who make the ornament of Greece, and that will for ever do honour to humanity! Have there ever existed more perfect examples of human virtue? Where shall we find more difinterested patriotism, more greatness of foul, or principles more austere, more pure? These eminent qualities are no doubt to be afcribed to the nature of the government, and were the happy fruits of liberty. On the other hand, however, Religion principally concerned herself with morals; her dogmas were intended to deter the people from vice, and to encourage them to virtue; and though she never was able to engender true heroifm, though she never had any power over thofe fuperior minds, to whom it is not neceffary to prefcribe rules of conduct, who find in themfelves their own reward, and who only obey that firft and moft facred of all laws which is engraven on their hearts in characters

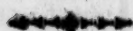
acters indelible; yet she raised her voice to the multitude; she was able at once to inspire them with the love of their duty, and to restrain them within just bounds; and the anxiety of the civil authority to make her respected, proves how necessary it was thought to have this useful purpose accomplished.

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It will not be expected that we should here treat of the Morality of the Ancients, nor that we should examine the progress it made among them, in what state they left it, and what improvements were made on it by the moderns. If we were to engage in this inquiry, we would begin with observing, that in studying those monuments of their manners which remain, the writings of Philosophers are not always faithful guides; for they, being addicted for the most part to speculation, have rather told us what men ought to be than what they really were in their times. But these reflections belong more properly to the history of morality, a work which is still wanting, and which is worthy of employing the attention of an able observer. It would be interesting to trace that science in its progress through different nations, and to estimate in this way the rank

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rank that ought to be assigned to them : for nations should not be held in estimation according to their military skill, their conquests, or the external pageantry of imaginary grandeur which attends them ; but in proportion to what they have done in behalf, or for the good of mankind. Thus, for example, while we admire the simplicity and chastity of the Grecian matrons, which, says Montesquieu, were so great that there never was a people more refined in this respect ; while we approve of the hardy and vigorous education they gave their youth ; their respect for age ; their hospitality, and all their other domestic virtues : we must still reproach them with maintaining the odious state of slavery ; the abominable law that enjoined the putting to death of those in a besieged city that were unable to assist in its defence ; their cruelty to prisoners ; and, in almost all their wars, the sanguinary retaliation made on their enemies worthy of the most savage hordes : practices which one cannot view but with astonishment among civilized nations, who spoke the same language, used the same customs, and who formed but one people. Perhaps we might find, that in certain circumstances our morality is far preferable to theirs ;

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that our manners are more gentle; that the laws of humanity among us are better known, and those of nature more universally regarded. The law of nations is now founded on a basis which does honour to the people of Europe; and without investigating precisely what changes have been occasioned by the difference of religion, we may venture to affirm, that if servitude no longer exists in our climates, it is to Christianity alone that we are indebted for its abolition.

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We have already had occasion to remark in how many respects, considered as a political institution, christianity was superior to the worship of the Ancients; but we are obliged to confess, that even in this point of view it did not maintain its superiority at all times.

THERE are certain duties and desires implanted in our hearts by Nature herself, which, in general, men are inclined to fulfill. We very universally believe, that a man ought to aspire after the esteem of his countrymen; and that it is unpardonable to be insensible to their praise: some carry still farther their views, and burn with the noble ambition of being known

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known to posterity. But these are not the principles that influence the true Christian. Disengaged from the allurements of this world, he treads honour and dignities under foot; he aspires after more durable blessings; and perhaps it is with justice that Bayle and Rousseau have concluded, that Christians will never form a state that shall subsist long; that a religion which inculcates humility and self-denial, which considers reputation as a vapour, and which recommends ignorance, must check the progress of the human mind. Such opinions, indeed, were adopted by Christians in the earliest ages of the church, such too made their appearance at the revival of letters, and such will always continue to be broached so long as men of little minds continue obstinately to persist in propagating error and the delusions of their own brain.

We cannot help deploring the irreparable injury such men have done to the sciences, by destroying all those monuments of the learning of antiquity which the fury of barbarians had respected. After having been forced to betray the truth, the unfortunate Galileo was loaded with irons for having dared to publish the

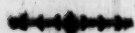
the true system of the world. Even at this day, there reigns almost in every branch of literature a narrowness of mind which has but too much disfigured it, and which makes us wish it were otherwise. The wisdom of Socrates, the eloquence of Plato, the profound genius of Aristotle, the virtues of Epaminondas, of the Scipios, of the Antonines, have often excited no sentiments but those of pity and compassion. Our learned men have bewailed their fate with a sincerity which we would be tempted to admire, if it did not excite in us at the same time the warmest indignation. The foolish pride of these men makes them believe themselves of a superior nature: they often appear animated with a holy rage, and bestow on the ancient sages the most injurious epithets. How often has the history of a people, confined among barren rocks and long unknown to the world, served to fill the canvas, that else might have been employed in representing the important consequences of great events, at least of such as are worthy of attracting our regard? In the different systems of chronology, the most laborious inquiries tend in general only to discover whether we are to follow the Hebrew, or the Samaritan text. But what connection can

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Rome, or the ancient monarchies of the East, have with those little Jewish tribes which have been invariably reduced to slavery? Prejudice has at all times governed opinions, and every where assigned to them their bounds : and if there are authors among us, who have dared to pass over these, they have either suffered the punishment of their noble temerity, or have been forced to observe the most extreme circumspection. An important discovery, new views of the origin of nations, facts more clearly explained concerning natural history, and particularly with regard to the organization of our globe, occasion universal alarm. This was not the case with the Ancients : unincumbered with any sort of fetters, they were at liberty to give a free scope to their imagination. Whatever was their system with regard to the formation of beings, to the laws of motion, to the sublimest doctrines of metaphysics, they were not afraid to divulge them nor to inculcate them upon their countrymen. Far from restricting the limits of Science, the religion which had been formed by the united acquisitions of mankind contributed to extend them, and guarded the sacred deposit with which it was intrusted ; while at the same time it encouraged

couraged Genius to wing a bolder flight, to aspire after every kind of glory, and even guided it in the road to Science.

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ONE of our Poets has well remarked, that the terrible Mysteries of the Christian religion are not susceptible of ornament. Indeed, says he †, what sort of an object would the devil exhibit, perpetually striving against the Supreme Being! And although this subject, in the hands of Tasso and of Milton, has furnished them with beauties of the highest kind, we see that in the construction of their poems they have followed the footsteps of the Ancients, and have been forced, after their example, to have recourse to allegory. But though this practice is now adopted merely from consent, no propriety authorizing us to personify moral attributes, it was originally the consequence of ideas established at a time when animation was ascribed to all the objects of nature. Homer did not offend the national belief when he introduced discord into the camp of Agamemnon, when he sent to that Prince a fatal dream, or when he made the many-coloured Iris descend into the midst of the Greeks to announce

† Boileau L'Art poetique.



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announce to them the orders of Jupiter. Transported in a moment to the top of Olympus, the reader was presented with the gayest, or most majestic images; such as the horses of a god that descended at one bound from Heaven to Earth: or the young Hebe, adorned with all the graces of youth, serving the immortals with Nectar and Ambrosia. These divine poems, which will be a source of delight to our latest posterity, exhibited at once the picture, though a fictitious one, both of history and of religion. Hesiod, Pindar, the voluptuous Anacreon, and the grave Tragedians, have all borrowed their descriptions from mythology; and this inexhaustible source likewise supplied the artists with their most brilliant models.

By endeavouring to exhibit to men an idea of the Deity, these insensibly arose to the conception of that ideal beauty which some of them have so admirably expressed, and which has since been attained only by Michael Angelo, Raphael, Guido, and a very few others, when they likewise attempted to represent the God of the Christians.

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WHEN from particular circumstances a country is once prepared to admit the cultivation of the fine arts, perhaps the influence of religion alone can cause the happy seed to germinate. They will acquire more or less growth in proportion to the simplicity of its worship, or to the pomp and magnificence of its ceremonies. It alone can give the requisite employment to sculptors, to painters, to architects, by offering them adequate encouragement; it alone, too, is able to inspire them with great ideas, and to fire their genius by the nature of the objects it presents to their view. It is not, for example, to be doubted, but that, in our days, it has contributed to the glory of Italy. Modern Rome owes to it the honour of being still the metropolis of the world. In order to have collected that crowd of monuments and master-pieces of every kind that adorn it; in order to have constructed at the foot of the Vatican that august edifice\*, which disputes the pre-eminence with those of Greece or of ancient Rome, it was necessary to have, what could not elsewhere be found, a succession of sovereigns, who should also be pontiffs, and be alike interested in maintaining the dignity of the sacerdotal office. And if in

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\* St Peter's.

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those countries, inhabited by an industrious people, but where an austere zeal has proscribed external ceremonies, has despoiled the churches of their ornaments, broken their marbles, and dismembered those statues which, being daily exposed to the view of the multitude, might sometimes have created artists; if in those countries ineffectual attempts have been made to invite the fine arts, may we not conclude that the reformation which banished them will for ever prevent their return?

BUT in Greece, Religion, the beauty of the climate, the happy disposition of the people, the love of their country, and of liberty, all conspired to carry the fine arts to the highest degree of perfection. We are uncertain whether the miraculous effects recorded of their music ought not to be ranked in the number of those fables, that have proceeded from an overweening admiration of antiquity. It has been said, that for want of necessary information with regard to the preparation of colours, their paintings could not have been possessed of the boasted superiority attributed to them. However, if we may judge of the perfection of this art in former times, by the monuments which



which have come down to ours, by the sight of those immortal productions which have escaped the injuries of time, and in which the genius of Phidias and Praxiteles are displayed, we will easily believe what we have been told of the other prodigies of art among the Ancients. We will be convinced, that by the sublimity of their music they could inspire the most ardent enthusiasm, and that the canvas started into life under the pencil of Zeuxis and Apelles. Those majestic ruins that are scattered over the territory of Athens, and the Peloponnese, give us, at this day, a lively idea of the noble edifices that formerly covered them. In the free cities of Greece, no palace was ever erected to insult the misery and bondage of the people. Architecture dedicated her art solely to the public edifices, especially to those in which the people assembled. The noble simplicity of the Doric, and the magnificence of the Corinthian capitals, served only to decorate the immense porticos which were destined for the reception of a crowd of citizens, the theatres that were to contain in their spacious bounds a whole people, or the temples the abode of the immortal gods. There were deposited the venerable images of their

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**Recapitulation of the reflections on the influence of Religion among the Ancients.**

deities and heroes ; and the citizen contemplated with equal admiration the powerful beings that guarded the safety of his country, the features of the great men that adorned it, and the genius of the artist who had acquired no inconsiderable claim to immortality.

By thus endeavouring to investigate the connection of religion with legislation, with political economy, morality, and the national character, we have successively pointed out her influence on the nations of antiquity. We leave to moralists, and to careful observers, the task of determining more particularly the extent of that influence; and we regret that the limits and nature of this work, and still more our own inability, will not allow us to resolve the important questions that seem to arise from the subject.

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## CONCLUSION.

**L**ET us then rest satisfied with having examined, though in a very imperfect manner, the different subjects we proposed to treat. We first of all divided the worship of the Ancient Greeks into two kinds, each of them marked with very distinguishing characters. The first, the Public or open worship, exhibited to us all the deities of mythology, separated into three great classes; the first representing the principles of all things, the second the system of the world, and the third the origin of the social state among men. The second sort of worship presented us with a much more important object, namely the Mysteries, which comprehend the dogmas and doctrines of the Ancients. After having taken a cursory view of some of their other religious institutions, such as the festivals, the sacrifices, and the art of divination, we thought it expedient to finish the picture with some reflections on that species of influence which such a religion must have had on the nations that adopted it.

General recapitulation of all the three objects treated of in this work.



CONCLU-  
SION.The fate of  
the Ancient  
Religion.

THAT Religion was long the prevailing one. Conceived in the East, in the first ages of the world, she kept pace among the Ancients with the progress of civilization. We find her spread over the Western countries in proportion as their savage inhabitants emerged from barbarity. From the Greeks, she passed over to the Romans, who carried her with their arms to the banks of the Rhine and of the Danube, and to the shores of the Western Ocean. She was peaceably established in all the countries that acknowledged the supremacy of the Roman dominion, when there arose against her an enemy, at first in nowise formidable, which for three hundred years hid itself in shades and obscurity, but which at last, invested with imperial purple, elevated its proud head, and planned her destruction, after having enriched itself with her spoils. While she was endeavouring to resist the attacks of the rising church, and was struggling with the authority of the sovereign, an unexpected revolution accomplished her downfall. The barbarians, that had come from the extremities of the earth to crush the Roman empire, used all the privileges of conquest. These haughty victors subjected the vanquished people to their opinions.

nions. The arts and sciences disappeared, and with them that religion by which they had been fostered. During the long night that brooded over our climates, she remained buried under the wreck of her temples. She lifted up her head again, as it were, with the monuments of enlightened antiquity, and seemed to rise from her ruins, when a new day came to illuminate our horizon. From this era she seems to have resumed all her rights. Let her not, however, be confounded with that hideous form, whose stern look strikes terror into the bottom of the soul: her empire is established over the imagination, and she will preserve it as long as those arts shall subsist with which she is so closely connected. From her, Poetry has drawn its noblest images, and Sculpture and Painting their most perfect models. Her deities are universally acknowledged. Their statues decorate our palaces; our theatres resound with the story of their adventures. In a word, we are so surrounded with mythology, that it is impossible to remain ignorant of its particular import.

CONCLU-  
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BUT the fables, as they are commonly presented to us, must appear absurd. We thought

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it would be an acceptable task to collect, and to place them in a single point of view, and to propose a rational explanation of them. Our aim has chiefly been to prove, that the Greeks really had what is called a Religion, and that that religion was truly worthy of a great people.

If we have accomplished the end that we had in view, perhaps this Essay may not be found unworthy of the reader's attention; he will perhaps deign to encourage the attempts of an author, who has spent his youth with the Muses, and who, after having cultivated them in retirement, now ventures for the first time to expose himself to the light, uncertain whether the weakness of his powers ought not rather to have condemned him for ever to obscurity.

A P.

But the tables, as they are commonly presented to us, must appear absurd. We thought



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# **A P P E N D I X,**

**CONTAINING**

**AN ACCOUNT OF SOME BOOKS**

**WRITTEN**

**On SUBJECTS that have a Reference to that of the  
preceding Essay.**

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A P P E N D I X

CONTAINING

AN ACCOUNT OF SOME BOOKS

WRITTEN

On Subjects that have a Reference to that of the  
preceding History.

## REMARKS,

OR

## OBSERVATIONS

On some Works relating to MYTHOLOGY.

*RECHERCHES sur l'Hellenisme et la Na- A.  
ture de la Religion de la Grece, par M. l'Abbé  
Foucher. Academie des Belles Lettres. Tomes  
34, 35, 36.*

THE author of the memoirs contained in these volumes treads in the footsteps of the partisans of Euhemerus. The only alteration which he makes in their system, is the substitution of the rite of Theophany for that of Apotheosis. According to him, the Ancients, who had some confused idea of the promise originally made to the first man, conceived likewise that the Deity had sometimes descended upon the earth, and had appeared in the likeness of the famous characters of antiquity, and consequently, that the religious fables are the



APPEN- the history of the actions of the gods while  
DIX. they remained among men. This is what M.  
---+---+--- l'Abbé Foucher calls explaining the doctrines  
of Mythology.

B. *Diodori Siculi Bibliotheca Historica.*

OF the forty books composed by Diodorus Siculus, only fifteen are extant. The four first treat chiefly of the Mythology of the Ancients.

THIS author wrote at a time when religion had ceased to be an object of much concern with his countrymen ; when the people, indiscriminately humbled under the despotism of Rome, had universally adopted its laws and its religious observances ; and when the spirit of philosophy had made them view, with neglect and indifference, those opinions which in less happy times have been the occasion of so many calamities. He considered the ancient fables as historical traditions disfigured : he was persuaded that all the gods had once been men, and therefore imagined himself obliged to begin his relation with the recital of their adventures. Hence arises that monotony which reigns

reigns through this part of his book. As he casts his eyes successively over the different countries of the earth, he is uniformly presented with the same objects. Deities that differ not essentially from one another, always produce events that are hardly dissimilar; and in the multiplicity of his details, which are incessantly repeated, it is as difficult to comprehend the source of mythology as its general spirit.

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*La Mythologie et les Fables Expliquées par l'Histoire, par M. l'Abbé Banier, 3 vol. 4to. Paris, 1738 et 1740. Translated into English, in 4 vols. 8vo. 1739, 1740.*

THIS work, which is very prolix, relates entirely to Mythology. The author does not confine himself to that of the Greeks and Romans, whose worship however makes the principal object of his inquiry: he treats also of the religion which was established among the Eastern nations, among the people inhabiting the West of Europe, and, in general, among all the nations of antiquity, except that of the Scandinavians.

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THE execution of such a task was beyond the powers of the Abbé Banier. He was a man of mean talents, and of a narrow mind; incapable of general views or elevated sentiments. Accordingly, he has left us a book compiled without taste, written in a low and grovelling style, in which he has found means to vilify, to degrade, and distort the most interesting images of the ancient mythology; some of which are uncommonly sublime, while others ravish the imagination with their grandeur and beauty.

THE dissertations with which he has embellished the collection published by the Academy of Belles Lettres, are all in the same style. They are twelve in number: *On the worship which the Egyptians paid to animals*, Tom. 3. *The History of the Centaurs*, Id. *On Typhon*, Id. *On Adonis*, Id. *On the Fates*, Tom. 5. *On the Furies*, Id. *On the Statues of Cybele*, Id. *On the Dea Matres*, Tom. 7. *The History of Belerophon*, Id. *On Perseus*, Id. *On the Argonauts*, four memoirs in the 9th and 12th tomes, and *the History of Medea* in the 14th. Of these we shall decline giving any account.



In the historical part of the 12th vol. there is a short treatise, intitled, *Reflections on Mythology*. This contains an account of the Abbé Banier's plan, concerning which he had consulted the Academy, while he was engaged on the large and dull work we have given an account of.

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*L'Origine des dieux du Paganisme, et le sens des Fables decouvert par une explication suivie des Poésies d'Hésiode, par M. l'Abbé Bergier, 2 vol. in 12mo. Paris, 1774.*

"THE origin of fables, says Fontenelle, is commonly ascribed to the warm imagination of the Eastern nations; but for my part, I attribute it to the ignorance of the first men. Place a rude people under the pole, and their first histories will be fables; all men are possessed with talents for this sort of invention without the aid of the sun." *Origin of Fables, Tom. 1.*

THE Abbé Bergier begins by adopting this idea. He maintains, in the first place, that the Religion of the Greeks is found among the Hottentots,

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Hottentots, on the coast of Guinea, among the savages of America, and that neither in Egypt nor in Asia are we to search for its origin. But afterwards he goes farther, and invents a system in which every thing is explained by the help of a geographical map. The ancient mythology, according to him, is nothing but a topographical description of Greece, when that country was still uncultivated: the attempts that were made to drain the marshes, to confine the waters, and to clear the ground, were soon converted into deities; and those gods whose genealogy we read of, and those heroes so famous for their exploits, are degraded from the rank they formerly occupied, to be transformed into canals, into dikes, and sometimes into rocks or mountains.

For instance, *Hercules*, in his system, is a Causeway, and the Twelve Labours have all a relation to this emblem. The *serpents* which he strangled in his cradle are rivers; as well as the *beautiful Dejanira*, the *boar of Erymanthus*, the *birds of the Lake Stymphe*, the *bull of the island of Crete*, and the *horses of Diomed*. *Geryon*, the monster with three heads, is a marsh from which issue three rivulets.

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THE *Centaurs* are torrents rushing from the mountains; the *Lapithæ* are ditches dug at the bottom for carrying off the water; and such is the origin of the celebrated war that was carried on between them.

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THE author discovers Thebes and its neighbourhood in the history of the family of *Cadmus*: by this prince we are to understand the hill on which the citadel was built; *Semele*, his daughter, is a fountain that issued from this hill: she becomes pregnant, because *Jupiter*, who is rain, has a connection with her; and the young *Bacchus* is a neighbouring marsh formed by the waters of *Semele*.

It is needless to have recourse to Astronomy, in order to find out who Atlas was. The name signifies a drawer of water, or a person who carries any thing on his shoulders; and as *Uranus*, the heaven, signifies also a vessel, it is no wonder, adds our author very ingeniously, that a drawer of water should carry it on his head, or on his shoulders. Here then is the pretended mount Atlas sustaining the heavens.

THE researches of M. l'Abbé Bergier have led

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to



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to other discoveries of a different kind, though not less interesting. Because *Artemisia* signifies Mugwort, a plant sometimes used by women, therefore that name was given to the moon. If Mars and Venus are surprised together, why, to be sure, it is because Vulcan discovered the amalgamation of iron with copper.

*Prometheus* is a composition of mortar, or of potters' earth; *Caucasus* means the hearth of a house. The suppression of a single letter in the Greek changes *eagle* into *fire*. Now as it is the property of this element to corrode incessantly all earthen ware, therefore an eagle continually devoured the intrails of Prometheus when chained to Caucasus. We may easily suppose that the style of this work corresponds with the sublimity of the ideas. It contains, moreover, a compleat translation of the poems of Hesiod.

- E. *Remarques concernant la Mythologie, a l'occasion du Livre de Selden, intitulé, Les Dieux des Syriens, par le Clerc. Bibl. choisie, tom. 7.*

*Projet*

*Projet d'un ouvrage ou l'on se Proposait de  
Donner une Explication Historique des Fables, par  
Le Clerc. Bibl. Univ. tom. 1. p. 245.*

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It does not appear that this work was ever published, and, if we may judge by the three following dissertations which were to make a part of it, we have no cause to regret the disappointment :

*Explication Historique de la Fable d'Hercule.  
Bib. Univ. tom. 1. p. 247.*

*Explication Historique de la Fable d'Adonis.  
Id. tom. 3. p. 7.*

*Explication Historique de la fable de Ceres.  
Id. tom. 6. p. 47.*

LE CLERC declares openly for the historical system, which he has endeavoured to establish in his notes upon Hesiod, and in his other various writings. He transforms the greater part of the gods into merchants, and their fabulous adventures become in his hands so many maritime expeditions. This author was a very learned man, and a very great critic ;





an idea of the disorder and confusion that run through the whole work. What Mr Bryant has announced as an analysis of ancient Mythology, is only a collection of particular treatises, not at all connected with one another, and from which it is impossible to strike the smallest spark of light. Perhaps no body ever made so bad an use of etymology. His arguments drawn from this source are in general forced, and often ridiculous.

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ON the other hand, nothing is more curious than the manner in which he reduces every thing to his opinion, when he has once chosen the subject of a dissertation. For instance, when he is treating of the towers and temples built by his Ammonians, of Noah's ark, of Noah himself, and of the dove that was sent out to the earth, then every thing that is to be found in antiquity, deities, heroes, and even animals become successively in his eyes, towers, temples, arks, and doves; and the Greeks were perpetually in the wrong when they applied to persons names that had originally belonged to these objects.

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that were built on the shores of the sea, and which sometimes served for light-houses, *Amphitrite*, *Tithonus*, *Obaron*, *Caster*, *Trophonius*, *Mentor* the friend of Homer, and who has been immortalized by that poet, even *Charites*, the name of the Graces, were all nothing but towers. The Cyclops, ancient inhabitants of Sicily, were towers; and therefore the transition was easy to the giants that inhabited them; if they were cruel and barbarous, it was because these giants sacrificed strangers that were unlucky enough to land at their towers: if they had only one eye in the middle of their forehead, it was to signify the opening at the top of the Pharos by which the light was diffused,

PROTEUS was a temple, and so was Cacus, Scilla, too and the place inhabited by the Sirens, Mr Bryant has continued to Proteus his ancient character; for in the same volume he makes him change his shape, and metamorphoses him into Noah,

IN every page appear representations of the ark, which he is astonished could have been mistaken. It is an error to think that the  
Ancients

Ancients adored the moon. The crescent signified evidently, by its two points, not the queen of the stars, but a ship, and consequently the ark. For the same reason, that is, on account of its horns, the Bull was deified. The horse *Pegasus*, the *Cup* of Hercules, the Egg of the ancient Mythology, that ingenious emblem of the creation and of fecundity, signified nothing but Noah's ark.

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THE dove especially acts a principal part in our author's system. It is represented under the different figures of the Pleiades, of Semiramis, Niobe, Juno, Diana, and Venus springing from the sea, like the dove before the waters of the deluge had retired from the earth. *Love* in Greek *Epos*, signifies the rainbow, and therefore he is always seen in the train of Venus. The two women who accompanied the famous Cleopatra Queen of Egypt were called *Eiras* and *Charmion*, names that Mr Bryant has rendered by those of *Pigeon* and *Rainbow*. The prophet *Jonas*, *St John the Baptist*, the *Apostle John*, were also called by the name of *Dove*; and when Jesus Christ says to Peter, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona*; the sense of this



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last expression *Barjona*, is, *Son of the dove*, or rather, *Bringer of good news*,

LASTLY, we need now give ourselves no farther trouble to investigate the famous trinity of Plato. That great philosopher made use of this figure to signify the three sons of Noah who were shut up in the ark. It would be easy for us to multiply similar examples; the few we have given will be sufficient to shew the genius of the author, and the merit of his book.

- G. *Defense de la Chronologie fondée sur les monumens de l'Histoire Ancienne, par M. Freret, 1 Vol. in 4to. Paris, 1758.*

NEWTON undertook to reform Chronology, His system seemed destined to lead the general opinion, as it bore the stamp of that great creative genius who had discovered the laws of nature. M. Freret, however, ventured to attack this great man. He brought against him all the force of reasoning and all the resources of erudition; he even combated him with his own weapons; and, in our opinion, he has overturned

overturned an elegant theory, which owed its success chiefly to the name of its author.

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THE *Defence of Chronology* is, besides, replete with the most interesting views of the Mythology of the Egyptians and Greeks, and on many important points of ancient history; and every where abounds with the signs of a genius capable of deep research, and displays that acuteness of criticism for which this author's writings are remarkable.

*Letters concerning Mythology. By Blackwell. H.*  
1 Vol. 8vo. London, 1748.

M. BLACKWELL endeavours to prove, that the mythology of the Ancients can be explained by allegory alone; but he has not been successful in the execution of his design. His work is exceedingly deficient in method, and the easy and graceful manner that we expect from the epistolary form, which he has chosen, is altogether wanting. If the reader is sometimes captivated by particular ideas, or by some happy illustrations, he is oftener disgusted by awkward and unsuccessful attempts at pleasant-  
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ry, and by a confusion in arrangement, which prevents him from taking any interest in the the subject.

- I. *Pauli Ernesti Jablonski Pantheon Egyptiorum, &c.* Commentary on the Gods of the Egyptians, with Introductory Essays on the Religion of that people, by Jablonski. Francfort on the Oder, 8vo. 1750. 3 Parts.

WE find here collected together every thing in the writings, either of ancients or moderns, concerning the theology of the Egyptians. The author examines in detail the gods of that nation. He begins with shewing that its first philosophers acknowledged one Supreme Being, whom they invoked under different names, according to his different attributes. Then he passes to the gods of subordinate degree, to those sensible and material deities, whose power seemed more direct, and made itself be felt daily. Such were the sun, the moon, the planets; such was that noble river to which Egypt is indebted for its subsistence, and in general all those beings that deserved to be sanctified



sanctified by religion on account of their effects.

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THIS work, besides the inquiries in which it abounds, is particularly to be commended on account of its methodical arrangement, a circumstance which but rarely accompanies erudition. Jablonski often draws his proofs even from the language of the Copts, the wreck of that which was formerly spoken on the banks of the Nile; and with the aid of sundry monuments, which still exist, he almost constantly succeeds in penetrating through the darkness of an obscure theology, which expressed itself only in hieroglyphics, the meaning of which was comprehended only by a very few of their learned men.

*Allegories Orientales ou le fragment de Sanchoniathon, qui contient l'Histoire de Saturne, suivie de celle de Mercure, d'Hercule et de ses douze travaux, et de leur explication, pour servir d'intelligence au genie symbolique de l'Antiquité, par M. Gebelin, Monde primitif, tom. 1. Paris, 1773. 4to.* R.

THE fragment of Sanchoniatho, which has  
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been preserved to us by Eusebius, has always appeared an inexplicable enigma. Many learned men have endeavoured unsuccessfully to explain it. Perhaps it has been reserved for M. Gebelin to discover its spirit, and the interpretation he has given of it is so simple that it is probably the true one. This has naturally led him to the explication of these allegories, each of which he considers as having a reference to the operations of agrestic life.

THE history of Saturn first of all presents us with the discovery of Agriculture and the happy effects it produces. Mercury comes next, to represent the invention of the Calendar and of rural Astronomy, so necessary to the husbandman. Lastly, under the emblem of a conqueror who fills the world with his exploits, the Sun is described with his salutary influences on the Earth. Hercules represents this beneficent star, and his twelve labours that made this hero so illustrious, mean the twelve signs of the zodiac, which the god of light traverses in his course with so much splendour.

AND here we cannot help particularly admiring the author; for though this last idea is

is not his own, though even the greater part of his explications are false, yet he has the merit of making this part of his work exceedingly interesting; and of having pointed out the road that in such inquiries ought to be pursued. His greatest fault is his endeavour to subject all mythology to agriculture. This art, of such unquestionable utility, and which at first was worthy of all the homage of mankind, was not however the only object of their worship. The allegorical genius of the Ancients took a bolder flight; it embraced all nature, and gave a figurative existence to all the moral and physical attributes of the universe. Besides, M. Gebelin, instead of forming a compleat body of Mythology, contented himself with collecting its scattered fragments, and with placing them in one point of view; but notwithstanding even the forced allusions to which he so frequently has recourse, he has not been able to bend the other fables to his purpose.

THE principal merit of his style consists in its perspicuity; though he is somewhat diffuse and unequal.

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*Histoire civile, religieuse, et allegorique du Calendrier ou Almanach, par M. Gebelin. Monde primitif, tom. 4. Paris, 1776. 4to.*

THE first part of this work contains little more than an account of those methods by which the people of antiquity measured time. But the subject requires much astronomical knowledge, which alone can throw light on such investigations.

As to the religious and allegorical history of the Calendar, the author has discussed the matter so fully, that nothing more seems wanting. The account he gives of the ancient festivals is full of original and very curious observation.

SOMETIMES indeed he seems to abandon his favourite system of agriculture, but generally falls into another error. The annals of all nations begin with fabulous traditions, and it is certainly difficult to fix the point which separates truth from fiction. M. Gebelin, contrary to the practice of those who conceive Mythology to be the history of real adventures, has but too much extended the empire of allegory ;  
and

and he wrests from history the facts that have been unanimously received as truths. Must we reject as falsehoods the accounts we have of the early ages of Asia, of Greece, and even of Rome, for no other reason than because Semiramis, Ninus, Pharnaces, Æneas, Menelaus, Remus, and Romulus may signify the sun or the moon? All these names are significant. If we take them in their primitive sense, we will soon find the gravest and most authentic events give place to the fancies of imagination. This is an effect which flows from the abuse of etymology, and by which our author was very frequently seduced.

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*Memoires sur les Pheniciens, par M. l'Abbé L. Mignot.*

*Vingt et un Memoires contenus dans les tom. 34, 36, 38, et 40, de l'Academie des Belles Lettres.*

M. l'ABBÉ Mignot stands unfortunately in the too-numerous class of those learned men who are imbued with prejudices, whose erudition is their only merit, and who are incapable of

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of adding a single idea to those we are already in possession of.

His inquiries with regard to the Phenicians consist chiefly in the application of sundry passages of the Bible. He talks of Abraham, and of the petty kings that were at war with him; he makes learned remarks on the Philistines, and on some of the little tribes in the land of Canaan. But after having read the one-and-twenty memoirs of this author, we are still as ignorant as before of that famous people, who in the earliest times formed the common bond of intercourse among the nations, who carried on a most extensive commerce during a long succession of ages, whose colonies, dispersed over the whole continent, flourished from the extremity of Africa to the most distant climates of the north, and who incessantly ran from one corner of the world to another, carrying with them wealth, the sciences, the arts, and civilization.

M. *Memoires pour servir a l'histoire de la Religion de la Grece, par M. de la Barre; trois Memoires*



*moires contenus dans les tomes 16 et 18 de l'Académie des Belles Lettres.*

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THESE three memoirs are the beginning of a work on ancient mythology, which M. de la Barre had not time to finish. The commentary he gives on the theology of Hesiod, shews us his ideas with regard to religion, a history of which he had undertaken. In his opinion, the genealogies of the gods, mentioned by the Poets, mean no more than the order in which they were successively introduced into the worship of Greece. For example, if Jupiter is considered as the son of Saturn, it is because the former was made known immediately after the latter; and so of the rest.

*De Natura Deorum; or, Discourses of Cicero N.  
on the Nature of the Gods.*

*Velleius*, one of the speakers, begins by detailing the doctrine of Epicurus; then *Balbus* explains that of the Stoics; and the author, under the name of *Cotta* the Academic, refutes them both. To their proofs he always opposes arguments drawn from sound reason and true philosophy.

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philosophy. Steady indeed to the principles of the sect he adhered to, he adopts no system. But it matters little, especially to us, that he gave no opinion on the nature of the gods. All we could have wished for, would have been certain information of what the Ancients thought on the subject; and the treatise of Cicero is so much the more valuable, as he has collected, not only the opinions of philosophers, but the ideas of the different people of antiquity.

In the historical part of the third volume of the *Academie des Belles Lettres*, we find an extract from a dissertation of M. Boivin, intitled, *Remarques sur l'origine des dieux*. One is somewhat surpris'd at the contrast between this treatise and the former; the author, trusting to the testimony of Philo the Jew, maintains that the deities of the Ancients were borrowed from the good and bad angels which are mentioned in scripture.

THE Abbé Anselme, in a memoir on the unknown god of the Athenians, supposes that this people, the most enlightened among the Ancients, had acquired the knowledge of one God;

God; "and that they were led by an instinct of religion to honour so many false deities, only because they endeavoured by an instinct of reason to worship the true God."

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*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 4. mem.*

After these learned researches, we may easily infer, that Cicero's ideas with regard to the religion of his country were not false.

*Histoire du Ciel, par M. l'Abbé Pluche, 2 vol. O.*  
in 12mo. Paris, 1748.

THE first part of this work is exceedingly curious. The reader, stationed in the midst of the monuments of learned antiquity, thinks he sees the veil that covered them fall off. Hieroglyphics no longer remain mysteries to him; he recognises, without trouble, the characters that were employed to mark the progress of the sun, the rising of the principal stars, the overflowing of the Nile, and in general the most remarkable phenomena of nature, in a country where they all had a reference to agriculture. The abuse of this symbolical way of writing soon gave birth to that



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multitude of deities, which from Egypt spread themselves over the rest of the world. Thus M. Pluche goes back to the origin of the Religion of the Ancients; and we must allow, that the greatest part of his reasoning at first sight appears specious. Though more accurate investigations afterwards destroy the illusion, and though this system, which is founded on astronomy, is overturned by astronomy itself; yet we must do justice to the ideas of the author, and sometimes to the manner in which he has presented them.

THE rest of the history of heaven is not nearly so interesting. It is even difficult to perceive the connection between the first volume and the second. In the latter, after having detailed the opinions of the greatest philosophers, as well ancient as modern, on the formation of the universe, M. Pluche compares their theories with the account of Moses, and concludes with reflections on the method of studying the Belles Lettres.

P. *Memoire sur l'origine des constellations et sur l'origine de la fable, par le moyen de l'astronomie,*  
par

par M. Dupuis, *inseré dans l'astronomie de M. de la Lande, tom. 4. p. 349.*

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THE ideas of a great genius bear at once the characters of grandeur and simplicity; such are those that this memoir presents.

M. DUPUIS considers the Zodiac at the time of its institution. Without disarranging the order of the Signs, he contents himself with restoring them to the places from which the precession of the equinoxes has gradually removed them. The Balance (*libra*) quits the autumnal equinox, and returns to occupy the vernal, which it originally was employed to mark. Thus antiquity assumes a new appearance. The names given to the Constellations, the figures by which they were represented, their relation to the state of the earth, are all explained; and from this source is naturally deduced the explication of the various fables. The intention of the author is to prove, that they are all drawn from astronomy. We might, perhaps, have wished that the author had been a little more methodical, and had written in a style somewhat less embarrassed: we may blame him for not having sufficiently distin-

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guished between what the Religion of the Ancients had borrowed from the celestial phenomena, and what related purely to metaphysics ; but we must consider that his memoir is only a sketch of a more considerable work, which he has promised on this subject, and which will undoubtedly be very important.

Q *Système d'Homere sur l'Olympe, par M. Boivin le cadet.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 7. mem.*

*Conjectures sur l'origine de la fable de l'Olympe, par M. de Mairan.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 25. hist.*

THESE dissertations contain two very opposite opinions on this point of mythology. According to M. Boivin, Olympus, as the Greeks conceived it, had its base in Heaven and its summit towards the Earth ; and thus he proposes to understand the description of it which Homer has left us.

On the other hand, the learned author of the Treatise on the Aurora Borealis, ascribes





Accus.

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ad-phi-phi-phi

SUCH is the principle on which the system of M. Boulanger is founded. This author finds traces of the deluge every where, and accounts for every thing by the deluge. In the deluge he finds the origin of festivals and ceremonies, of the greater part of customs, of all political and religious opinions, and of the primitive laws on which societies have been established. It is but too evident, that he has been obliged to distort many objects in order to give them this appearance. In general, however, we must do justice to his penetration, to his original and lively manner, and often to his ingenious and judicious reflections. But, on the other hand, the work is by no means calculated to create an interest in the reader. There reigns throughout a fatiguing monotony; the same ideas are perpetually repeated, and the same objects incessantly presented to view; while the dull and melancholy aspect they are made to wear, contributes to increase the disgust of the reader.

8. *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences, et lettres sur l'Atlantide de Platon, par M. Bailly.*

THESE two works are very superficial, for they

they are founded on vague and frivolous conjectures; and the imagination, transported into the region of chimæra, can find nothing on which to rest. A professed romance has at least one object; but what is to be said of a country which has never existed, and of a period of which the remembrance is annihilated?

OLAUS RUDBECK, born in Sweden, chose to make his country the birth-place of the human race. M. Bailly goes infinitely farther north: he places the original seat of the fine arts, and of all our knowledge, in Spitzbergen, in Greenland, and in Nova Zembla, at ten degrees from the pole, (lettr. sur l'Atlantide, p. 465.) These countries, says he, are certainly those that were first inhabited, and from them have men spread themselves over the great continent of Asia. As indubitable proofs of this progress, he alledges certain instruments of copper left in the mines of Siberia, and afterwards found near the river Jenisei, about the latitude of  $56^{\circ}$ , (p. 274.) In advancing southward, these people carried with them the sciences, which they had invented before their migration. And as *the Dutch against their will*  
*passed*



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*passed a winter in Nova Zembla, if we ask how letters and philosophy could have been cultivated in the midst of a cold that freezes the ideas as well as the waters, (p. 423,) we are given to know that these regions, now so inclement, were formerly much otherwise: that a perpetual spring reigned there; that an uniform heat maintained satisfaction in every heart, and made life as agreeable, and as happy as it was long: but that the earth, losing its heat by degrees, and the refrigeration beginning at the poles, a dilated zone acted upon a zone that was condensed; the north wind, which lays waste the fields; and the south which brings tempests, consumed the life of man; and at last nature, retiring daily from these regions, shut them up for ever, (p. 431, 432, and 439.)*

- T. 30 *Dissertations on the Mysteries of the Ancients, by Warburton. The Divine Legation of Moses, book 2d section 4th, vol. 1. London, 1765. 8vo.*

THIS dissertation may be considered as a complete treatise on the Mysteries. The author explains their origin, establishes their connection with legislation, and proves that they contained

tained the most important dogmas of the Ancient Religion.

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If he has been sometimes mistaken with regard to their subject, his investigations must, however, be allowed their just claim to ingenuity, and he has almost always made a very happy use of his erudition. He has shewn in particular, great penetration in his application of the metamorphoses of Apuleius, and of the sixth book of the *Æneid*, to the Mysteries. It appears certain, after the reading of this work, that the descent of Virgil's hero to Hell is a representation of the initiatory Mysteries. Thus, that beautiful Episode is not merely a masterpiece of poetical composition. Besides the pomp and majesty of the images, besides the sublimity that reigns throughout, it presents us with a magnificent description of all the ceremonies practised in the temple of Eleusis; and for this discovery we are indebted to the author of the Divine Legation of Moses.

*Meursii Eleusinia; or, a Description of the V. Mysteries of Eleusis, by Meursius.*

EVERY circumstance that remains in the writings

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writings of the Ancients concerning the Mysteries of Eleusis, and every thing that is in any way connected with them, is here brought together. The author contents himself with sketching out a plan, by which the passages he has thus collected may be arranged, and he leaves to the Ancients themselves the care of supplying the materials; for his work is made up of the very words of the ancient authors. A method highly valuable, as it furnishes a vast number of materials ready collected. Accordingly, all who have treated of the Mysteries of the Ancients, such as Warburton, Bougainville, Gebelin, Ste Croix, and ourselves, if the mention may be allowed us, all have been sensible of the merit of Meursius's work, and have been ready to acknowledge it.

**X.** *Recherches sur l'origine des mysteres celebres a Eleusis en l'honneur de Ceres, sur quelques circonstances de cette fete, et sur les principaux ministres charges d'y presider, par M. de Bougainville.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 21. mem.*

This is an excellent memoir. The author has



has had the art of comprising, in little room, the most important objects of the mysteries. He has particularly endeavoured to describe their form and exterior pomp, and has been careful to mark the purpose for which these ceremonies were instituted.

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*Memoires pour servir a l'histoire secrete de la Religion des anciens peuples, ou recherches historiques et critiques sur les mysteres du paganisme, par M. de Sainte Croix. Paris, 1784. 8vo. 1 vol.* Y.

THIS work is, properly speaking, a history of the Mysteries, from their institution among the different people of antiquity, to the abolition of their rites by Christianity. Considered in this light, the researches of the author are very curious, but not decisive: his observations in general are too vague, have no certain object, and give no information with regard to the most important points of the secret Religion of the Ancients.

*Dissertation sur les hymnes des anciens, par M. Z. l'Abbé*

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*Abbé Souchay*: two memoirs contained in the 12th and 16th volumes of the memoirs of the *Académie des Belles Lettres*.

These two memoirs contain excellent matter, and are written in a very agreeable style. The Abbé Souchay distinguishes three different kinds of hymns. The first, which he calls *Theurgic*, were calculated to convey information with regard to the religion of those that were initiated into the mysteries. The hymns of Orpheus are a precious monument of this kind. The second, such as those of Homer and Callimachus, included the adventures of the gods, and in general the whole objects of the popular creed: these the author denominates *Poetical*. Lastly, he gives the name of *Philosophical* to those that are dictated of an enlightened mind, devoid of every kind of superstition: in this class is ranked particularly the celebrated hymn of Cleanthes, one of the finest morsels that antiquity has left us.

AA. *Recherches sur les thesmophories, pour servir de prolegomenes a la comedie d'Aristophane, intitulée, les thesmophoriazuses; et a l'hymne de Callimaque*

*limaque en l'honneur de Ceres Thesmophore, par M. du Theil.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 39. mem.*

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In the same volume are two other dissertations by M. du Theil; the first entitled *Recherches sur les fetes Carmentis pour servir a l'intelligence de l'hymne composee par Callimaque en l'honneur d'Apollon*: the other, *Recherches sur les differentes fetes instituees chez les Grecs en l'honneur de Pallas pour servir d'intelligence a l'hymne de Callimaque en l'honneur de cette deesse.*

THESE three memoirs are exceedingly curious, the first especially, in which the author treats of the feasts and of the worship of Ceres. His observations are made with much perspicuity and elegance, and they throw light on a great many points of ancient mythology. We have only to regret, that he did not extend the same inquiries to the other hymns of Callimachus. We would then have had a valuable commentary on that poet; and such a work would have compleated the excellent translation that M. du Theil has given us of his hymns.

De



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*De divinatione, by Cicero.*

BB.

THE Ancients, as we are informed in this treatise, defined *divination* to be a presentiment and fore-knowledge of things to come. They had exalted it into an art, the principle branches of which were the oracles, the science of augury, the interpretation of dreams, and the predictions of astrology.

THE author begins by introducing his brother Quintus, who maintains the cause of divination. Cicero seems, by thus collecting whatever could be said in favour of this fallacious art, to turn it the more successfully into ridicule. In the second part, where he himself becomes the speaker, we see an enlightened philosopher, untinctured with the errors that religion had sanctioned, and who is guarded against the impositions of frivolous argument, and the multitude of facts and authorities with which Superstition is always ready to defend the prejudices she has adopted.

*Neuvelle*

*Nouvelle conjecture sur l'oracle de Dodone, par  
M. l'Abbé Sevin.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 5. hist.*

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THIS conjecture, at that time apparently new, consists in discovering, that, as the same word may signify in Greek an *old woman* and a *dove*, the Ancients came at last to attribute to doves, oracles that had nothing supernatural in the manner of giving them.

*Memoire sur l'oracle de Dodone, par le pre-  
sident de Brosses.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 35. mem.*

THE President de Brosses adopts the same interpretation of the word *dove*; but he enters into a long and particular detail of the oracle at Dodona. The dissertation in which he gives the history of it, contains very ingenious observations with regard to the religion and customs of the first inhabitants of Greece, whose gross opinions continued still to maintain their influence, even after the sciences and arts had succeeded the ages of barbarism. The annals of mankind afford but too many examples of the same thing.

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THERE is another work of the same author, intituled, *Du culte des dieux fetiches, ou parallele de l'ancienne Religion de l'Egypte avec la Religion actuelle de la Nigritie*. The name of *fetiches* has been given to the different objects which the negroes on the coast of Africa exalt into deities, and which generally consist of a stone, the branch of a tree, the bone of a fish, a feather, sometimes even a bit of cloth, according to the caprice of the devotee. The President de Brosses has made many inquiries into this species of worship; and, struck with having in every country discovered traces of it, he has been insensibly led to imagine, that the Religion of the Ancients had the same origin, and that *le fetichisme*, as he calls it, was its foundation. This system, supported with all the erudition of the author, has enabled him to reconcile many usages very successfully; for people, in passing from barbarism to civilization, never entirely abandon their antient customs: but his ideas are by no means applicable to that religion which had for its aim the study of nature, and which, among all the nations of antiquity, was the repository of human knowledge and acquirements.

*Histoire*



*Histoire des oracles, par Fontenelle.*APPEN-  
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DD.

VANDALIUS owes all his reputation to Fontenelle. The compilation of that learned Dutchman, when translated into the French language, received many embellishments, and became a regular production. Our author had a peculiar talent in bestowing graces on subjects which seem least susceptible of them; it is, however, to be wished in this instance, that he had not followed his model so closely, but that, content with the materials which he found ready collected, he had prosecuted a plan more worthy of a philosopher.

SUCH a history ought not to consist merely in a description of the oracles; their origin should be investigated, the causes that contributed to their credit and authority ascertained, and their connection with the Religion of the Ancients, of which they constituted a part, pointed out. It is also necessary to inquire, how, among the most civilized people, they became in the hands of the chiefs an instrument arbitrarily made use of to influence the multitude. These inquiries are scarcely mentioned in the work before us, which is wholly taken

APPENDIX. up in proving that the oracles were not uttered  
 DIX. by the devil: an absurd opinion, which did  
 not deserve a serious examination.

IT is remarkable, that at the very time when Fontenelle was thus employed, Bayle was endeavouring to fortify the nations of Europe against the terror they felt on the appearance of comets. But there is this difference between the *histoire des oracles*, and the *Pensées sur la comete*, that there is nothing now valuable in the first but its style, and perhaps not even that, if simplicity and elevation be principal requisites: while the work of Bayle comprehends such a variety of objects, it abounds with so many exquisite strokes, so many reflections drawn from sound philosophy, that it will always be read with pleasure, though, for the honour of the human mind which he contributed to inform, comets are now no longer objects of terror.

WE have another little treatise by Fontenelle, *sur l'origine des fables*, which we have had occasion to mention, when talking of the ridiculous work of the Abbé Bergier. Fontenelle never fails to express himself elegantly,

gantly, and we are pleased with him, even when he is endeavouring to support a paradox.

Acad.

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*Observations sur les recueils de predictions ecrites qui portaient les noms de Musée, de Bacis, et de la Sybille, par Freret.*

EE.

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 33. mem.*

As at first the oracles, and especially that at Delphi, gave responses only on certain days of the year, written predictions were manufactured for such as wished to be instructed in what was to happen, and these they consulted at pleasure. Such were the collections of Musée, of which it was thought the disciple of Orpheus was the author; that of Bacis the Beotian inspired by a nymph; and the most celebrated of them all, that of the Sybil who made so important a figure in the religion, and even in the politics of Rome.

*Dissertation sur les Batyles, par M. Falconnet.* FF.  
*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 6. mem.*

*Dissertation*



**Art. 1.** *Dissertation sur la pierre de la mere des dieux,*  
**Dix.** *par le meme.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 23. mem.*

THE *Batili*, or stones of the mother of the gods, were specially consecrated to Cybele. M. Falconnet supposes that they were the *bisteroli, zhi*, so called by naturalists on account of their singular conformation, and they were thought to be an impression of the shell called *Concha Veneris*. "It was, says he, on account of a pretty perfect resemblance to the mouth that the worship of this stone was imagined. No better symbol could be devised to represent a goddess who had given birth both to men and gods, and whom the philosophers consider as nature itself, the fruitful source of whatever exists in the universe."

**cc.** *Memoire dans lequel on examine plusieurs questions générales concernant les ministres des dieux a Athenes, par M. de Bougainville.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 18. mem.*

THIS dissertation sets before us an idea of the priesthood in Greece. We find that this dignity

nity was not incompatible with the other functions of civil society, that the priests had a revenue annexed to their office, that they formed no separate body in the state, and that, far from possessing any jurisdiction, they were even ignorant of the business in which religion was most interested.

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M. DE BOUGAINVILLE almost always joins precision in his discussions to elegance of style. We have by him, likewise, on the same subject, the extract of a memoir, intituled, *Eclaircissemens généraux sur les familles sacerdotales de la Grece.*

*Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. 23. mem.*

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